

# THE CHURCH OF GOD



By **A. J. POLLOCK**

Author of

"THE TABERNACLE'S TYPICAL TEACHING"

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Etc., Etc

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# THE CHURCH OF GOD

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## FOREWORD

THAT the church of God has a very special place in the mind of God is very plainly seen in Scripture. For fulness of meaning and wealth of language the following Scriptures could not well be surpassed. The Apostle Paul wrote:—

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3: 8—11.)

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.” (Rom. 16: 25—27.)

“The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”  
(Col. 1: 26—27.)

It is well to meditate long and earnestly on these Scriptures. It seems as if the Apostle Paul were struggling with the inadequacy of human language to express the wonder of the mind of God respecting His church. The Epistles to the Ephesian and Colossian assemblies, the great church epistles, have been well termed **adjectival**, so marked are they by wealth of language, particularly of adjectives.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTORY

THE word, **church**, is the translation of the Greek word, **ekklēsia**, meaning **that which is called out**. It is translated **church** 112 times, referring to the whole body of Christians at any given time since the Day of Pentecost.\* That was the day when the church of God was formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit of God, indwelling each believer, uniting them to Christ in glory, and to each other as members of the one body of Christ on earth.

What gives added preciousness to this thought is that each one called out is the fruit of eternal counsel, each one marked out for this high honour by God Himself for this special calling. It stands in contrast to the **earthly** calling of Israel. The church's place is not, as Israel's will be, a millennial portion on earth, but an everlasting portion as the bride of Christ in the Father's house on high for ever. It is a **heavenly** calling.

The late Archbishop Trench gives an interesting explanation of how the word, **church**, came to be introduced into our English Bibles. He tells how Greek missionaries long ago evangelised savage tribes in the region of the Danube basin. Their word to describe the church was the Greek word, **kuriakos**, meaning **belonging to the Lord**. Alas! in course of time, this beautiful meaning was lost, and the word degenerated from describing the Lord's people to designating the building of wood and stone in which the believers assembled, just as we talk to-day of the churches of a city, meaning the edifices of stone or brick with steeples or towers. As the tribes were evangelised, this word with this meaning was incorporated into their language. So we

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\* The word, **ekklēsia**, is translated three times as **assembly**, referring to the crowd of rioters at Ephesus as narrated in Acts 19: 23—41. It is noteworthy that in J. N. Darby's New Translation, **ekklēsia** is invariably translated **assembly**. In Scandinavian Bibles the word, **ekklēsia**, is always translated by their equivalent of the word, **assembly**.

have the word, **church**, referring to an ecclesiastical building; as **kirche** in Germany; **kirk** in Scotland; **church** in England. These variations show plainly their derivation from the Greek word, **kuriakos**.

With this explanation we will use the word, **church**, as translated in our English Bibles, bearing in mind it does not refer to a building of stone or brick, but to the congregation of believers, called out of the world by the grace of God between the day of Pentecost, and the coming again of our Lord; to the body of believers at any given time since the day of Pentecost; or to any assembly of believers in a given place.

### MEANING OF THE WORD, MYSTERY

In the Scriptures we have quoted, the word, **mystery**, occurs four times. It is the translation of the Greek word, **mustērion**, meaning **that which is known only to the initiated**. The church of God was a mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world. Twice over in the Scriptures we quoted, we are told the mystery has been made known to the saints. A mystery made known is no longer a mystery to whom it is made known.

The reason why the church of God was a mystery in Old Testament times was that the offer of an earthly kingdom was to be made to the Jewish nation in the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah and King. Not till that offer was made, and rejected, was the way made plain for the revelation of this mystery. When once this point was reached the fulfilment of prophecies relating to the Jewish kingdom was **arrested**. Not till the church is raptured to glory will the fulfilment of Jewish prophecies be resumed. Doubtless events are happening which will work towards the day when the fulfilment of Israel's prophetic history will be resumed, such as the returning of the Jews to Palestine in large numbers, and in unbelief. But not till the church is raptured to glory will the Jew become prominent in relation to the fulfilment of Scripture prophecies.

The situation has been happily likened to a Jewish train, arriving at different stopping-places at the appointed times, till the time arrived when the Jewish nation crucified their

Messiah and King. The church train then began its journey on the Day of Pentecost, and until it arrives at its destination—the Father's house—at the second coming of our Lord, the Jewish train is, as it were, shunted in a siding. When the church train will have reached its destination, then the Jewish train will emerge from its siding, and resume its journey according to plan, till its terminus is reached in the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. That is the meaning of that great chapter, Romans 11, which tells us that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. 11: 25.)

Further, it is evident that the full truth of the church of God could not be made known until our Lord had completed the work of atonement on the cross, and had taken His place of pre-eminence at God's right hand in heaven, and from thence had sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers, thus forming the church of God upon the earth.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12: 13.)

## CHAPTER 2

### FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHURCH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament saints had types of Christ in their Scriptures, but not knowing the glorious Antitype, as we do in Christ and His finished work on the cross, they had not the key to open up the Scriptures as we have. The New Testament throws a flood of light upon the Old Testament.

Doubtless the Old Testament sufficed for the spiritual needs of the saint living in those days, though for about the first two thousand five hundred years of the world's history there were no Scriptures at all. Yet God revealed Himself to Abraham, Job and many another in a won-

derful way. But it is the New Testament saint who gets the full value of the Old Testament Scriptures. So we read,

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”  
(Rom. 15: 4.)

## ADAM AND EVE, A TYPE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

No Old Testament saint reading Genesis 2 could see more in it than an intensely interesting account of how man and woman came into the world. They might wonder why man and woman were created in such a unique way. They might ponder over it for long, but they would never guess that a most precious type of the death of Christ, as necessary to possess **His** bride, was here foreshadowed. Yet in the light of the New Testament this is plain.

We have New Testament warrant for so understanding this most precious type of Christ and the church, given at so very early a stage in the history of mankind. We read,

“Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5: 25—27.)

A little lower down in the chapter this is indicated even more clearly. We read,

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but **I speak concerning Christ and the church.**” (Eph. 5: 31, 32.)

As the marriage relationship has been known ever since man and woman were created, many have thought that it afforded a **convenient** illustration of Christ and the church. In the light of Ephesians 5, however, we gather that the marriage relationship was **purposely** established to be an illustration of what was in the mind of God before time was as to Christ and the church. This is confirmed

by the fact that Ephesians 5: 31 quotes Genesis 2: 24. Thus the Old Testament and the New Testament grasp hands over the centuries.

This is deeply interesting, lifting marriage to a very high standard; the more so as we see the purity of the marriage state being assailed on every hand. We have the unsavoury spectacle of divorce courts being crowded. Where one judge once sufficed to attend to these sordid matters, it takes several to-day to cope with this tide of evil. How this stands in lurid contrast to the divine exhortation,

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.” (Eph. 5: 25.)

The late well-known servant of the Lord, C. H. Macintosh, a man marked by deep affection, used to ask newly wedded young men if they were seeking to be Ephesian husbands? Surely a high standard, but it is the standard of the Word of God. How much happier a world it would be, if this were carried out.

Another very striking thing to be noticed is, that this first type of the death of Christ occurred **BEFORE ever sin came into the world**. We may well ask the reason for this, for death is the penalty of sin. In this Scripture it is not so much the setting forth of the necessity for the atoning aspect of the work of Christ, though that is a prime necessity for God's glory and the sinner's salvation. Seeing that sin had not come then into the world, the reason must be found in a different direction. The answer to our question is very beautiful. It is the foreshadowing of **LOVE seeking to obtain the object of its affection**, the type, as we shall see, of our Lord willing to go to the death of the cross for the express object of securing His bride.

The LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. Whilst in that condition He took one of his ribs, and therefrom made He a woman, and brought her to the man, the first record of a surgical operation. We read,

“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen. 2: 22, 23.)

Eve was of Adam. The church of God is of Christ.

Adam fell into a deep sleep. Christ went into the deep sleep of death to possess His bride.

Adam, "who is the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 14), was the head of the OLD creation. Christ is the Head of the NEW creation.

Adam exclaimed that Eve was bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. Of the church, Christ's bride, it is said that believers are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. (Eph. 5: 30.)

That is to say what was literally and physically true of Adam in relation to Eve, is **symbolically** and **spiritually** true of Christ in relation to His church.

Genesis is the book which gives us the beginnings of things. A very happily phrased title is given to the first introduction of things in the Scriptures. It is called "The law of first mentions." These first mentions, generally speaking, present in very few words the essence, the fundamental thought of the divine mind in relation to the subject in hand, to be developed in detail in subsequent Scriptures. In this first mention of Adam and Eve we have a most striking example of this.

One has only to read Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5 to see the close relationship between the two, as of type and antitype, of illustration and the thing illustrated. Its occurrence so early in the history of mankind shows how very dear the thought of the church is to Christ.

## ISAAC AND REBEKAH, TYPE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Thrilling is the eastern story of how Rebekah was won to be Isaac's bride, but still more wonderful when we see in it a type of Christ and His church, His bride. It should be carefully noticed, however, that the story of Isaac and Rebekah is **preceded** by the touching tale of Abraham offering up Isaac, and receiving him as "in a figure" (Heb. 11: 19) from the dead, setting forth typically the truth so insisted upon throughout the New Testament, that there could be no church of God, no bride for Christ, apart from the sacrifice of our Lord

on the cross, settling the whole question of sin for God's glory and man's blessing.

It is interesting to note that Genesis 22: 2 is the first place in Scripture where the word, LOVE, occurs, and that after more than two thousand years of the world's history had passed by. Here it is the love of Abraham to Isaac, the love of the father to his son, typical of the love of God—the love of the Father to His Son. We read,

“ Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou LOVEST, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (Gen. 22: 2.)

Abraham was to take his son, his “ only son,” a term of great endearment, the dearly loved child of promise, to offer him up as a burnt offering. God sent HIS Son, His only begotten Son, into the world to die on the cross.

“ The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4: 14.)

When the sacrificial knife in Abraham's hand was poised in mid-air to strike the fatal blow, we know how his hand was divinely held back, and a substitute provided instead of Isaac in the ram caught in the thicket by its horns. But in the case of our blessed Lord there could be no substitute.

“ **Himself He could not save,  
He on the cross must die,  
Or mercy could not come  
To ruined sinners nigh.  
Yes, Christ, the Son of God, must bleed,  
That sinners might from sin be freed.**”

Abraham's obedience to this command must have been the most exquisite anguish to a parent's heart, yet it pales into utter insignificance before the supreme example of our Lord, who

“ Humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2: 8.)

Following the story of Abraham offering up his son Isaac, we get the beautiful tale of the wooing of Rebekah on the behalf of Isaac. Abraham sent a trusted servant,

a type of the Holy Spirit, to distant Mesopotamia for this purpose, warning him not to take a wife of the Canaanitish enemies of the Lord, but to seek one of Isaac's kindred. Thus is illustrated how the Holy Spirit does not take the raw material of the ungodly world wherewith to build His church, but chooses those who are the subjects of the grace of God, those who are saved from their former life of alienation from God, and are brought into "newness of life." The church belongs to the New Creation, stainless and pure, and not to the Old, with its corruption and violence.

Arrived at a well, where his camels could be watered, Abraham's servant prayed that the wife chosen of the Lord for Isaac should appear, and in response to the request for a drink of water should offer to give drink to his camels also. As he thus prayed, a daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, appeared. Rebekah was very fair to look upon, and acted just as Abraham's servant prayed that she should. He then adorned her with a golden earring and two golden bracelets, enquiring eagerly who she was, and where she came from, joyously exclaiming, "I being in the way, the LORD led me." (Gen. 24: 27.)

The damsel returning to her mother's house told of this unexpected happening, whereupon Laban, Rebekah's brother, came out and entreated Abraham's servant to enter the house. Food was put before him, but he refused to eat till he had declared his errand, so intent was he to carry out the task with which he was entrusted. He told of Abraham's wealth, of his flocks and herds, of his men servants and women servants, of his silver and gold. He told above all of the miraculous birth of Isaac, of God's promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He told how Abraham had given all that he had to Isaac, and that his one desire was to find a wife of his own kindred for his beloved son. Does this not remind us forcibly of the Scripture,

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John 3: 35)?

The story told, the servant produced jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah,

typical of spiritual blessings God bestows upon His people, who form the church of God.

**Silver** is typical of redemption, a first necessity, if we are to be associated with Christ in His risen life.

**Gold** is typical of divine righteousness, so that the believer can stand before God in the conscious sense of acceptance on the ground of the atoning death of our Lord.

**Raiment** sets forth typically that the righteousness of God, through the atoning death of our Lord, is "UPON all them that believe." (Rom. 3: 22.) This righteousness is **imputed**, not of the believer's making in the slightest degree, but all of God's wondrous grace. The youngest believer stands in this divine righteousness before God as much as the maturest saint, aye, as much as the saints in glory. Immediately the prodigal in all his rags returned to his father, the servants were bidden to "bring forth **THE BEST ROBE**, and put it on him." (Luke 15: 22.) What the epistle of Romans states doctrinally (Rom. 3: 22), the gospel of Luke sets forth parabolically (Luke 15: 22). Imputed righteousness is the best robe.

Abraham's servant, keen to finish his task, urged that he should be allowed to depart without delay. The mother and brother, however, pressed that Rebekah should stay at home for at least ten days, and that then she might go. How like this is to worldly believers, who would defer out-and-out surrender to Christ, and laying their lives wholeheartedly at His blessed feet; substituting for consecration to Him half measures, compromises with the flesh and the world, dishonouring to the Lord and disastrous for the believer. There is nothing like full surrender to the Lord's will. We read,

"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live UNTO THEMSELVES, but UNTO HIM which died for them and rose again."

(2 Cor. 5: 14, 15.)

Abraham's servant, however, pressed for immediate departure, whereupon the brother and sister enquired of Rebekah herself as to this. How beautiful and decisive was her response.

“ And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I WILL GO.”  
(Gen. 24: 58.)

Was there ever such a wooing? The servant must have told his story right well to induce a young woman to travel a matter of between five and six hundred miles on her camel, through wild desert lands, infested by bandits and robbers, to marry a man she had never seen.

Surely if Rebekah acted in this decided manner, we, Christians, should not be behindhand in out-and-out decision for the Lord. How true of believers in relation to our Lord are the words of Scripture,

“ Whom HAVING NOT SEEN, ye love; in whom, though now YE SEE HIM NOT, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”  
(1 Peter 1: 8.)

Surely in the light of the New Testament the nameless servant of Abraham stands for a beautiful type of the Holy Spirit of God, engaging the affections of God's people with the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom. Were this influence not at work in this world there would be alas! no response on the part of sinful men. How cheering it is to see the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit in souls. How real is this work! This is the secret of the persistence of Christianity in this world.

So Rebekah started on her adventurous journey, getting as far as the well Lahai-roi in the south country in the land of Isaac's sojourn. Isaac, expectant, walked in the fields at eventide, and behold the camels were seen in the distance. Rebekah at the same time lifted up her eyes, and saw Isaac for the first time afar off. She enquired who he was. The servant replied, “ It is my master.” Hearing this Rebekah took a veil and covered herself, a sign of her new relationship to Isaac.

“ And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he LOVED her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.” (Gen. 24: 67.)

This is only the second time that the word, **love**, is found in the Scriptures. The first time, as we have seen, it sets

forth typically the love of the Father to the Son; the second time, the love of Christ to the church, His spotless bride.

Of course it is very obvious that an Old Testament saint could only read in this story a very beautiful account of how Isaac wooed and won Rebekah, deeply important surely to him, as being in the line in which was wrapped up all the promises of God to the nation. The Lord's people, however, rejoice to study in the light of the New Testament this most precious type of Christ and His church, and in so doing gain a deeper sense of the desire that the Lord has to possess Himself of His bride, even to the giving of Himself in death, and that the death of the cross.

“Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5: 25—27.)

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS AND THE NEW MEAT OFFERING

THE next type of the church in the Old Testament we will consider is that of the New Meat Offering of Leviticus 23: 15—21. Here again, as we have already seen to be ever the case, there is presented **first** a type of the atoning work of Christ on the cross.

The Feast of the Firstfruits of the harvest is given in Lev. 23: 9—14.

The Feast of the New Meat Offering is given in Lev. 23: 15—21.

We shall see how divine is this order, and how the one feast follows the other in right sequence. These two feasts are further specially significant as being the only two

feasts of the Lord that occurred **on the morrow after the sabbath**. The sabbath was the great event in the week for the Israelites. Their religious ceremonies circled round that particular day. But here was a new departure. The pious student of the Old Testament times must have wondered again and again why these two feasts were to be celebrated **on the morrow after the sabbath**.

### THE FEAST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE HARVEST

We shall do well to consider what great event in the history of the world occurred **on the morrow after the sabbath**. This is called in the New Testament **the first day of the week**. The four evangelists, all specially emphasise the first day of the week in connection with an event of surpassing importance. We read,

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward **the first day of the week**, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre . . . and the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." (Matt. 28: 1-6.)

"And very early in the morning **the first day of the week**, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun . . . and he [the angel] saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." (Mark 16: 2-6.)

"Now upon **the first day of the week**, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre . . . behold, two men stood by them in shining garments . . . they said . . . He is not here, but is risen." (Luke 24: 1-6.)

"**The first day of the week** cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre." (John 20: 1, 2.)

The waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was typical of the resurrection of our Lord. The sheaf

was waved **on the morrow after the sabbath**. Our Lord rose **the first day of the week**. That was the day of all days when our Lord rose triumphant from the dead, having brought to completion the great atoning work of redemption on the cross, the declaration on God's part of His complete satisfaction with the work He sent His Son to perform. It was the outward and visible sign that the power of sin, death, and Satan's power was shattered, that salvation could be offered to sinful men. That was the astounding event, the importance of which it is impossible to exaggerate. It occurred **on the morrow after the sabbath, on the first day of the week**.

Just as the sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest looked forward to the full harvest to be reaped, so Christ was indeed the Firstfruits of the harvest of God's grace, to be gathered in by the preaching of the gospel. Apart from His atoning death on the cross there could be no blessing for man. He was the glorious Fulfiller of this most precious type. So we read,

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the FIRSTFRUITS of them that slept . . . but every man in his own order: CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

(1 Cor. 15: 20—23.)

What a glorious harvest that will be when our Lord "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isa. 53: 11.)

### THE NEW MEAT OFFERING

**The Meat Offering** of Leviticus 2 must not be confounded with **the New Meat Offering** of Leviticus 23.

**The Meat Offering** of Leviticus 2 is typical of Christ in His perfect life down here, consummated in His death and so pleasing to God.

**The New Meat Offering** of Leviticus 23 is typical of the church of God, the fruit of the death of Christ, being presented to God.

**The Meat Offering** was to be baked WITHOUT leaven.

**The New Meat Offering** was to be baked WITH leaven.

**The Meat Offering** was typical of Christ, and must be without leaven, for leaven is always symbolic of evil, and

there could be no thought of evil in connection with Him.

**The New Meat Offering** was typical of the Church presented to God. It was baked with leaven, an acknowledgment that sin attaches to the believer.

“ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1: 8.)

The fire when the new loaves were baked would stay the working of the leaven, just as actual sin committed was met by the Sin Offering.

Again we are told that **The New Meat Offering** was to be offered **on the morrow after the sabbath**, and that **fifty** days were to elapse between the Feast of the Firstfruits and the New Meat Offering. We ask, What great event took place **fifty** days after our Lord rose from the dead? We know that our Lord was **forty** days on this earth between His resurrection and ascension. As our Lord ascended to heaven He bade His disciples tarry at Jerusalem till the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit of God, should come upon them, and they should be endued with power from on high. The tarrying time must have lasted **ten** days, till the Day of Pentecost arrived, when the Holy Spirit of God was given, and the church of God constituted a living entity. (Acts 2: 1.)

This is still further emphasised, for the word, Pentecost, comes from the Greek word, **pentēkostē**, meaning **fiftieth**. This then was **the morrow after the sabbath**, the **fiftieth** day after our Lord rose from the dead, and the great day of the church's birthday and endowment, and of its being presented to God. The two loaves presented to Jehovah typified that the church is made up of Jewish and Gentile believers, hitherto irreconcilable elements, but now one in Christ; the middle wall of partition being broken down in His death, and Christ being their peace. This is one of the great themes of the Epistle to the Ephesians. (See Ephesians 2: 13—22.)

How could an Old Testament saint, poring over this most precious type, distinguish what we Christians see in it? Yet there is no type in the Old Testament which sets forth the church of God so plainly to the New Testament reader as this Scripture does. This mystery was indeed

hidden till it was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit. It could not be known till then, as stated in Ephesians 3: 5.

#### CHAPTER 4

### THE ONE FLOCK AND ONE SHEPHERD

We come now to the New Testament. The first subject we would draw attention to is our Lord's teaching, in which His people are likened to sheep, and Himself as the Good Shepherd. (John 10: 1—16, 26—30.) Even the Old Testament likened Israel to Jehovah's sheep:

“ And ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men,  
and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.”

(Ezek. 34: 31.)

But here we get a foreshadowing, faint though it necessarily be, of Christ and the Church. It awaited the great Day of Pentecost before that truth could be known in all its fulness.

In John 10, Judaism is likened to a fold, where sheep were kept in by walls, that is by rules and regulations. Our Lord entered the fold in order to lead His Jewish sheep OUT, and called them to follow Him. Those, who followed, got what the fold could never furnish, characterized, as it was, by the law, the ministry of types and shadows, by sacrifices of the blood of bulls and goats, which could never take away sin. In contrast they found in Christ the Door, not the door to return to the fold from which they were called OUT, but the Door into spiritual blessings such as the fold could never furnish—salvation, liberty, food, life abundant. These blessings could only come to them through the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep, laying it down in an atoning, vicarious, sacrificial death.

There would be opposition from Satan, as there always is when God works. The thief, the hireling and the wolf would do their deadly work.

**The thief** is seen in the rationalist and ritualist against whom Colossians 2 warns the saints. Can we not see his work to-day in the efforts of the Modernist and Higher Critic, undermining the inspiration of the Scripture, denying the virgin birth of our Lord, refusing to believe the miracles that He wrought, denying in extreme cases the very bodily resurrection of our Lord? Is it not seen in the obscuring of the simplicity and purity of Christian doctrine, smothering it under the weight of ornate and superstitious ritualism, perverting and setting aside the very truth of God.

**The hireling** fleeth when he seeth the wolf coming. When a man professedly takes the position of being a pastor of the flock of God for mere gain or social privileges, and these things are presently imperilled by persecution, he flees from his post, showing that he at best is only a hireling. The hireling cares for the fleece of the sheep, and not for the sheep themselves, a condition of things alas! largely seen in Christendom to-day.

**The wolf** scatters the sheep. Here we have open persecution. "Throw the Christians to the lions" was the cry heard again and again in the crowded Colosseum at Rome. Think of the persecution of the Waldensians, the burning of Cranmer, and Ridley and Latimer and many another, the horrible secrets of the Inquisition, and persecution in lesser degrees as well, and we see the wolf at work.

" OTHER SHEEP . . . NOT OF  
THIS FOLD "

Then we get "other sheep not of this fold," referring to the going out of the gospel of the grace of God to the **Gentiles** far and wide. Would this not cover the Apostle Paul's lifelong ministry, and of many others of God's servants?

" Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold\* [literally **one flock**], and one Shepherd." (John 10: 16.)

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\* The Greek word, **poimnē** (flock) is here wrongly translated **fold**. It should be translated **flock**, in harmony with the teaching of the Scripture. In all other cases where the word, **poimnē**, occurs, it is rightly translated **flock**.

Is there not here in the blending of Jew and Gentile a foreshadowing of Christ and the church?—for in Christ alone these irreconcilable elements are seen as one. The shepherd-care; the death of the Good Shepherd for the sheep; the calling out of the sheep from the Jewish fold; the finding of “other sheep,” Gentile believers; the displacement of the fold in view of the **one** flock; no longer walls of legal restraint to keep the sheep together, but a Person, a new Centre of attraction drawing all to Himself—these all illustrate many wonderful truths that work together in view of the full unfolding of Christ and the church.

Is this not exemplified in the closing verses of that great gospel Epistle to the assembly at Rome? That Epistle unfolds the **full** meaning of the cross of Christ, both as meeting the penalty of the sins of the believer, and also as judging and setting aside sin in the flesh, our sinful nature. The last three verses of this Epistle in a very remarkable way link Paul’s gospel with the unfolding of the mystery, kept secret since the world began. The Epistle to the Romans thus links on very directly with the great church epistles of Ephesians and Colossians. We read:

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

The preaching of the gospel and the ministry of the truth as to Christ and the church are here seen as supplementary and complementary one to the other.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE APOSTLE PETER'S OUTSTANDING CONFESSION

It is very noticeable that the only record of our Lord when on earth, speaking of His church, should be found in the Gospel of Matthew, which presents Christ as the King of Israel, the Messiah of His ancient people. This record shows that He anticipated His rejection by His earthly people, and how He would build on the confession of His name, that which would be indestructible, even His church.

At the time that our Lord spoke thus, He and His disciples were at Caesarea Philippi in the very far north of Palestine, far removed from Jerusalem and the Temple service. Ichabod was written over the Temple with its gorgeous ritual. The system, which would refuse the advances of our Lord, was surely doomed.

Our Lord asked His disciples a deeply important question,

“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”  
(Matt. 16: 13.)

The men of that day were sorely puzzled where to place our Lord. His wonderful miracles, His precepts, His speaking with authority and not as the scribes, the gracious words that fell from His lips—all marked Him out as greatly outstanding. The guesses that were made were extraordinary, involving the resurrection of the great men of past. Was He John the Baptist, risen from the dead? Was He Elias or Jeremias, or one of the old prophets? Such guesses ascribed a very large place to our Lord, but immeasurably lower than the real truth as to His Person. Nay, does not the sad history of the great schisms of the church down the centuries from apostolic days reveal that this question is the rock upon which shipwreck has continually been made?

Our Lord again asked this stupendous question, this time of His own disciples:

“ But whom say YE that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 16: 15, 16.)

The whole of Christianity is wrapped up in this question and answer. Our Lord asked this question as the Son of Man. Of His Manhood there was no doubt, for He stood before them in flesh and blood. But was there no more than that? Listen to the noble confession of Simon Peter. How profound was His answer, far beyond the power of human nature to make. Such a stupendous truth concerning the Person of our Lord could only be a **matter of revelation**, brought home in the power of the Spirit of God. So our Lord said,

“ Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 16: 17.)

“ THE CHRIST ” means the Anointed, that is the One to whom God has entrusted the carrying out of His will upon the earth. This involved our Lord going to the cross, and dying an atoning death in order that man might come into blessing. So our Lord from that time forth began to tell His disciples how He must be crucified and rise again the third day. (Matt. 16: 21.)

“ THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.” Here we have the acknowledgment that our Lord was more than Man, the acknowledgment that He was from all eternity the Son in the unity of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God. He was “ God . . . manifest in the flesh.” (1 Tim. 3: 16.) Not the creature, however exalted, but “ God blessed for ever. Amen.” (Rom. 9: 5.) He was God, the Son; as the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Not three Gods, but one triune God, One in Three, and Three in One—one God, One in purpose, will, and knowledge, One from all eternity to all eternity. This is the sublime faith of the Christian.

Upon this rock, the confession of His glorious Person, Christ would build His church, and the gates of **hades** should not prevail against it. Here we get the invincible foundation of the church of God. What a relief to turn from church history with its unutterably sad story of declension, divisions, schisms, sects, worldly assumptions,

and to know that what Christ builds will abide for ever, and be beyond the power of the enemy to destroy, and that the church will emerge in all the glory of God throughout the eternal ages.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE DAY OF THE CHURCH'S BIRTH

We come now to the historical institution of the church of God. For this four things were necessary:—

- (1) The coming of our Lord into this world, and His atoning death on the cross; the great work of redemption done to God's satisfaction, without which no blessing could flow to sinful men.
- (2) The resurrection of our Lord, the historical proof of God's full satisfaction in the work of redemption.
- (3) The ascension of our Lord to God's right hand in heaven, taking His place on high in relation to His people.
- (4) The bestowal of the Holy Spirit, indwelling each believer, forming them into the one body of Christ on this earth, Christ the glorious Head in heaven linked up thus with each member of His body on earth.

We read:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12: 12, 13.)

### PENTECOST WAS THE CHURCH'S BIRTHDAY

Our Lord had commanded His disciples to tarry at Jerusalem until the promise of the Father should be given

and they should be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24: 49.) So we read of the twelve apostles, with the women and Mary, the mother of our Lord according to the flesh, and His brethren, continuing in prayer and supplication in an upper room, waiting for the moment when the new era of Christianity should be inaugurated. (Acts 1: 13, 14.) They waited till the fiftieth day after our Lord's resurrection should arrive, prophesied in Leviticus 23, as we have already seen. This wonderful day in the history of the world, "the morrow after the sabbath," "the first day of the week," the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, saw the disciples, numbering about one hundred and twenty, gathered "with one accord in one place." (Acts 2: 1.)

It must have been a moment of intense and awesome expectation, a strangely new experience, for none knew exactly what was to be expected. We read:

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2: 2.)

That the coming of the Holy Spirit of God should be likened to "a rushing mighty wind," would show that the Spirit's power is irresistible. We have heard of winds reaching such high velocity as to tear up giant trees by the roots as if they were rows of ninepins. The word for **wind** and **spirit** is the same in the Greek language. The wind cannot be seen but its power is felt, so the influence of the Holy Spirit can be felt, and yet not seen in a corporeal fashion. So we read,

"The wind [Greek **pneuma**] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit [Greek, **pneuma**]." (John 3: 8.)

"Cloven tongues like as of fire" appeared, and sat upon each one of the believers, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Holy Spirit coming thus upon the disciples stands in vivid contrast to His descending like a dove, an emblem of peace, upon our Lord at the time of His

baptism by John the Baptist. Everything in our Lord was pleasing to the Father. There was nothing contrary to holiness in Him. With full complacency the Spirit could descend upon Him in this striking fashion.

In the case of believers the Spirit came upon them as "cloven tongues like as of fire." The tongue is an organ of speech. It is the **speaking** tongue that marks man in contrast to the lower creation. We read that no man can tame the tongue. (James 3: 8.) But here a new power comes into the believer, and the sign of that indwelling, the **cloven** tongue, sets forth separation from evil. One of the marks of the clean animals, which the children of Israel were allowed to eat, was that they had cloven feet. This teaches that the Holy Spirit of God must have separation in heart and ways in the believer, so that He be not grieved, but able to give joy and communion in divine things.

The cloven tongues were like as of **fire**, which speaks of judgment; that all of the flesh, and that which is contrary to the holiness of God, must come under His unsparing condemnation. If we refuse to judge ourselves the Lord will judge us; the fire must consume the evil. We read:

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

(1 Cor. 11: 31, 32.)

The Holy Spirit's normal work is to comfort the believer, fill him with holy joy, guide him in his Christian life, show the things of Christ to him, but if the believer turns aside from the will of God, then the Spirit grieved may have to act in judgment, as seen in the case of the Corinthian believers, some of them being weak and sickly, and some even taken in judgment from the earth. We read:

"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. 8: 13.)

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot\* do the things that ye would."

(Gal. 5: 17.)

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\* J. N. Darby's New Translation renders this passage, "that ye **should not** do the things that ye would."

With this agrees the judgment seat of Christ for the believer where gold, silver, precious stones—symbolic of deeds done in the power of the Spirit of God—stand the test of the fire, symbolizing the judgment of God. Wood, hay, stubble—symbolic of the deeds of the flesh—will be consumed by the fire of judgment. We cannot play fast and loose with the Holy Spirit of God.

The immediate result of the outpouring of the Spirit of God was the infilling of the believers with the Spirit, and their speaking with tongues. A vast number of Jews from all parts of the then known world were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. Hearing of this miraculous happening the multitude came together. Each heard the gospel in the tongue in which he was born. Those represented many languages and vast stretches of country. Thus would God by miracle lay stress upon the happenings on the great Day of Pentecost, when the church of God was inaugurated and set up.

This produced an enormous result. The expectant disciples, who waited for the great day to come, numbered about one hundred and twenty persons. Peter's sermon on that memorable day was used to the conversion of no less than about three thousand souls, who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2: 42.)

It is remarkable that the first effect of the outpouring of the Spirit was evangelistic, seeing there was brought into existence that day the church of God. The church is indeed the handmaid of the gospel. Without the gospel there would be no church. The more we truly esteem the one, the more we shall esteem the other. Each is part of God's plan for His own glory and the blessing of His creature.

The reception of the gospel resulted in a completely different orientation of life for the believer, the entrance into a spiritual fellowship formed by divine teaching, and outwardly marked by the breaking of bread and prayers.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE APOSTLE PAUL, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AND OF THE CHURCH

The Apostle Paul had a double ministry bestowed on him by the Lord. To him was committed the ministry of the gospel of the grace of God, and also the ministry of the church. That one servant of Christ should be thus graced shows that these ministries are not antagonistic, but complementary, sympathetic and vital to each other.

Alas! it is not unknown in Christian assemblies that some are known as the gospel party, and others as the church party. Such a state of things is shameful and suicidal. To exalt the gospel to the detriment of church teaching, or to exalt church teaching to the detriment of the gospel, only proves that those, who indulge in such shameful work, do not know the **real** truth about either. The evangelist is as much a gift from the ascended Lord as the pastor and teacher. To despise either evangelist or teacher is to despise the Lord, who bestows these gifts.

The Acts of the Apostles presents Paul as most active in preaching the gospel of the grace of God. His life's motto was, "Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Cor. 9: 16.) His preaching led to the formation of assemblies in Gentile cities, to the ministry of the truth of the church, and all that that implies. Paul was the writer of the great church epistles addressed to the Ephesian and Colossian saints, and that too when a prisoner at Rome with the gleam of the executioner's sword before his aged eyes. What an irreparable loss it would have been had these precious epistles not been found in the word of God.

We give side by side the Scriptures that affirm his double ministry of the gospel and of the church.

"A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." (1 Cor. 9: 17.)

"The hope of the gospel . . . whereof I Paul am made a minister.

(Col. 1: 23.)

"His body's sake, which is the Church; whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God." (Col. 1: 24, 25.)

## THE APOSTLE PAUL'S SUFFERINGS FOR THE CHURCH

Paul had a very unique place in relation to the Lord and His church. Even at the very start of his Christian life, when he was converted on the road to Damascus, the light "above the brightness of the sun" striking him down to the ground, was this unique position foreshadowed. He tells us,

"I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, **why persecutest thou ME?**" (Acts 26: 14.)

It was revealed to him at the moment of his conversion that in persecuting the poor of Christ's flock on earth, he was in reality persecuting Christ Himself. In truth, in that question, **Why persecutest thou ME?** lay the germ of the wondrous truth of Christ and the church; that in persecuting the members of Christ's body on earth, he was persecuting the Head in heaven.

We now call attention to a very wonderful Scripture, showing what a unique place Paul held in relation to what we are considering.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints." (Col. 1: 24—26.)

All through the Lord's public testimony on earth the leaders of the Jewish nation plotted to take His life. Eventually they crucified Him on a cross of shame. The church, which He was to build on the foundation of the confession of His name, was then **yet in the future**. Any sufferings to be endured in the formation and progress of the church of God through this world our Lord could not share in, for when the church was first formed our Lord was in glory, and past all earthly sufferings. It was therefore reserved to the Apostle Paul to have the high honour of suffering for the church, and "**to fill up**" that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh for

Christ's body's sake, which is the church. The Greek word for "fill up," **antanaplērō**, only occurs in this particular passage, and means **to put in as a complement** (Liddell and Scott); **to fill up instead of** (Young). It is a remarkable and outstanding word.

These are not atoning sufferings, they are unique to our Lord, but martyr sufferings the Apostle endured.

The Acts of the Apostles bears testimony to the extraordinary sufferings of the great apostle, lasting till a martyr's death gave rest to a body, worn out in devoted service to his Lord. We read:

"In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, **the care of all the churches.**" (2 Cor. II: 23—28.)

What an amazing record! Surely only the Apostle Paul could lay claim to it. No wonder he could write to the Galatian assemblies that henceforth no man should trouble him, that none should question his apostleship, for he bore in his body "the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. 6: 17.) His frail body bore the scars, the **stigma**, the record of what he had endured for the sake of the church, the body of Christ.

It surely was a masterstroke that transformed the arch-persecutor of the church of God into the chosen vessel of God to bring out in full measure the truth as to the church of God, and to that end be unremitting in toil and danger in bringing the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles, and in teaching them truths concerning His church.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

In the absolute sense of the word the **only** foundation is Christ Himself. We have seen how He declared that He would build His church on the rock of the confession of His Person as the Son of the living God. Again we are told,

“ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.” (1 Cor. 3: 11.)

But in a **secondary** sense, in the administration of the introduction and progress of Christianity, we find Scripture declaring,

“ Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.**” (Eph. 2: 19, 20.)

It is good in this verse to see how jealous the Spirit of God is lest we should get our eye off Christ, and think only of the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets were but intermediaries, that is, they acted on behalf of the Lord and in His power. So we find the Spirit of God carefully adding the words:

“ JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.”

In Roman Catholic circles we have the sad spectacle of a big virgin and a little Christ. In some quarters, and where least expected, we have the sad spectacle of a big church and a little Christ. A brother in the Lord, well known to the writer, told him how utterly astounded he was when a man, professing to be an advanced Christian, shocked him by saying that the day would come when Christ would stand to one side to allow His church to be displayed. He requested this man to repeat what he said that he might make no mistake. He repeated the same words, blasphemous in their daring, and misconception

of the truth of the Scripture. When this tendency sets in you will get a self-satisfied people professing to be the church of God, but in reality only a hollow, lifeless shell.

We find this startlingly exemplified in the Laodicean church. (Rev. 3: 14—22). There we find what professes to be a church, and—CHRIST OUTSIDE. It is pathetic beyond words to see the Lord outside, knocking at the hearts of these professors, calling even for a single individual to open the door, and give Him entrance.

Could complacency go further than that found in this Laodicean assembly, claiming to be rich, and increased with goods, and having need of nothing? But what was the real truth as to their condition? The blessed One, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, His eyes as a flame of fire, told them they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked. How devastating was His denunciation!

Satan is very seductive, and we need to be on our guard against his devices. It is not for nothing that he transforms himself into "an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11: 14.) If we are so foolish as to imagine that we are not in need of such a warning, we stand in danger of being ensnared. There is ever a tendency to exalt ourselves. If it be at the expense of our blessed Lord, we shall find we are nothing and have nothing apart from Him.

Christ is the chief corner stone, and gives character to the whole building. The size and style of the corner stone will indicate what kind of building is to be erected. What a church this must be that takes its character from the Son of God! The heart warms at the wonder of this, past our feeble comprehension.

The Greek word, *akrogōniaios*, translated **chief corner stone**, means a **corner FOUNDATION stone**, also at the **extreme angle**. (Liddell and Scott.) The former meaning expresses the thought of the church being God's masterpiece, taking its character from Christ as the chief corner stone, and that this glorious foundation stone was laid in the unutterable, atoning sufferings of our Lord at Calvary's cross.

The chief corner stone unites two walls at an extreme angle. We know what an acute angle, as it were, existed

between Jew and Gentile. The exclusive Jew despised the outside Gentile. The Gentile nothing loth returned the bitter feeling in full. There is no feud so deadly as that of a religious character. We have seen a wave of anti-semitism sweeping over Europe. Gentiles murdering Jews by the hundreds of thousands, nay, by millions. Never in the history of the world have these divergent peoples been brought into harmony till the church of God came into existence. It is to the glory of God that these warring elements have been fused, and brought together in happy fellowship. Only as Jew and Gentile come under the power of the cross of Calvary are their prejudices melted. The following Scripture shows how this truth is emphasized:

“ But now in Christ Jesus ye [**Gentiles**] who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace [**Jew and Gentile**], who hath made both one [**Jew and Gentile**], and HATH BROKEN DOWN THE MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION between us [**Jew and Gentile**]; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man [**Jew and Gentile in new creation**], so making peace; and that He might reconcile both [**Jew and Gentile**] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off [**Gentiles**], and to them that were nigh [**Jews.**] For through Him we both [**Jew and Gentile**] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. 2: 13—18.)

We see in this striking passage how very definitely Jew and Gentile are blended together in one body IN CHRIST. There is a need that Christians should study this passage carefully. We may say that it concerns Jew and Gentile only, but there is a principle in this that can be applied to-day. The writer has had the privilege of visiting Christians in several foreign lands. He found the tendency to look at the assemblies in their own country as a separate entity, and found them asking the question, Why need we trouble as to what obtains in the way of Christian fellowship in other lands outside of our own? The writer felt deeply that the only way of counteracting this tendency is to pay attention to the teaching we have just been considering. We need to have engraved on our hearts the truth

that there is **one** body and **one** Spirit and **one** hope of our calling. The church of God is one wherever Christians are found, whatever their nationality, language, social position, or colour of skin may be.

The only other occasion where the Greek word, **akrogōniaios**, chief corner stone, is found in Scripture occurs in 1 Peter 2: 5, 6. The Apostle Peter is thus found in perfect harmony with the Apostle Paul. We read,

“ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone [**Greek akrogōniaios**], elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.”

But God is pleased to use instruments. He used apostles and prophets in a special way at the start of Christianity. The church is founded on the apostles and prophets, “ Jesus Christ Himself, being the chief corner stone.” See how God used Peter on the great Day of Pentecost, opening to the Jew the door into the church of God, three thousand souls being converted on one day. (Acts 2: 41.) He likewise, opened the door to the Gentiles when he preached to Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, and his friends. (Acts 10 and 11.) Then we find Paul, commissioned by God as the Apostle to the Gentiles, preaching in pagan lands, and assemblies springing up as the fruit of his labours.

We must remember the ministry in those early days was very largely **oral**. The great church epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, were not written till Paul was a prisoner at Rome near the very end of his strenuous life with martyrdom lying before him. The instruction of these epistles must, however, have been taught **orally** before they were written. True, there was the Old Testament, but even that would be rarely, if ever, possessed by Christians, for printing was unknown in those days, and manuscript copies would be rare and very expensive.

Scripture warrants us in believing that ministry at first would be largely oral. We read in Ephesians 3: 4, 5, that the mystery, unknown in past ages, was revealed to the

apostles and prophets, surely for the purpose that they should pass on the revelation to the saints. We must remember these "prophets" were **New Testament** prophets, and linked up specially with the apostles as the foundation of the church. Once that foundation was laid the apostles and prophets passed away. They completed their task in laying the foundation.

Another Scripture throws light upon the service of the prophets. We read:

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. 14: 29—31.)

There it is plain that whilst there was opportunity for all to prophesy, yet there were occasions when the prophet had a **divine revelation** to communicate orally to the brethren. When this happened, such a communication was not to be delayed, so much so that if another was speaking at the time, he was to hold his peace. There must have been some distinct sign that marked the giving of such a revelation by the Spirit.

Another Scripture shows clearly how the truth was largely ministered orally in the early days of the church. Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith:

"And the things that thou hast HEARD of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."  
(2 Tim. 2: 2.)

"Many witnesses" could check the accuracy of Timothy's memory. It is said that in those days of more natural living, before printing was relied upon for information, and the mind was not burdened with the details of modern life, memory was much more reliable and acute. If the teaching of the Christian faith was largely oral, one can imagine what close attention the divine communications would command. Timothy having heard the wonderful ministry of the Apostle Paul was to use diligence to hand this on to faithful men for the purpose that they might teach others. A veritable chain of oral

ministry. When the Day of Pentecost arrived not a single line of the New Testament had been written, yet the three thousands converts of that day

“ Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.”  
(Acts 2: 42.)

It is plain that if not a line of New Testament Scripture had been written at the time of their conversion, their instruction must have been oral.

Thank God we have the completed New Testament in our hands. Therein we have delineated for us the life of lives in the four gospels. In the epistles we have unfolded to us the doctrinal meaning of the death of our Lord on the cross, the blessings of the gospel that come to the believer, the intent for which believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, their relation to Christ in glory as the Head of His church, their conduct as strangers and pilgrims in this world, the prophecies as to the future and the glorious hope of the Lord's return for His saints to rapture them to heavenly glory.

The invention of printing by metal type has greatly favoured the spread of all this wonderful revelation of God's great plan for His glory, the exaltation of Christ and the blessing of His people. It is interesting that the invention of printing by metal type occurred just when the light of the Reformation, at the time of Wycliffe in England and Luther in Germany, began to break forth. The printing of the whole Bible, often at the risk of martyrdom on the part of the translator, was the prelude to a blessed outburst of God's work in souls. It seemed as if the invention was discovered purposely for the multiplication of the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER 9

### VIEW-POINTS OF COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

COLOSSIANS and Ephesians are pre-eminently the great church epistles of the Bible. On the surface they may strike the superficial reader as covering pretty much the same ground. But on a careful examination of their contents, different view-points stand out clearly.

COLOSSIANS is marked by constant reference to **Christ** in various ways, all leading up to His headship of the body, His church. There is no reference whatever, be it carefully observed, to the Holy Spirit in the unfolding of the doctrine of the epistle, though of course the whole epistle is inspired by the Spirit of God.

EPHESIANS on the other hand is marked by no less than twelve references to **the Holy Spirit** in connection with the doctrine of the epistle.

There must be a distinct reason to account for this striking difference. We have been helped by visualizing the difference as follows: The view-point of Colossians is that of a believer on earth standing before God in a risen life in Christ, and saying, I have a Head in heaven. The view-point of Ephesians is that of our blessed Lord in heaven, saying, as it were, I have a body on earth through whom My life may be perpetuated, and My work in the world accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

COLOSSIANS looks **up** to see the glorious Head in heaven, without whom there could be no spiritual life on earth.

EPHESIANS looks **down** to see the body of Christ on earth.

COLOSSIANS stresses the "holding the Head." (Col. 2: 19.)

EPHESIANS stresses "there is one body, and one Spirit." (Eph. 4: 4.)

Christ, objectively presented, must be prominent in Colossians, if the purpose of the epistle is to recall the

Christians to the truth of our Lord's headship in heaven. And this is just the object of the epistle. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2: 9.)

Just as evident is it, that if the body of Christ is prominent in Ephesians, references to the Holy Spirit of God will be prominent, for the body of Christ on earth, His church, can only function and display the life and activity of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God.

### THE TWO PRAYERS IN EPHESIANS

These are found in Ephesians 1: 16—23, and 3: 14—21.

The first prayer is **objective**.

The second prayer is **subjective**.

The first prayer is marked by the word, "HIS," referring to our Lord; "HIS calling"; "HIS inheritance"; "HIS power"; "HIS feet"; "HIS body."

The second prayer is marked by the word, "YOUR" and kindred words, referring to the saints: "That He would grant **you**"; "that Christ may dwell in **your** hearts"; "that **ye** being rooted and grounded in love."

In the first prayer we read of "HIS calling." If Christ calls, then it must be a great calling. If a humble man marries a young woman, she shares in the humble position he has; but if this same young woman were the choice of the king of the land, she would share in his exalted position, none would be higher than she. This is at best but a feeble illustration, for what honour untold is put upon the saints to be the subjects of "HIS calling," even of that of the Lord of glory. What must the hope of that calling be but beyond our feeble understanding, to be with Him, to be like Him, to share His glory, to be His bride, the object of His affections for ever.

No wonder that when the Apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven he heard words, unspeakable in human language, and unlawful on earth. What will it be when we enter on the full realization of "HIS calling." We have to wait for our glorified bodies with no trace of the old creation, or the flesh remaining, before we can enter fully upon what lies before us. It is beyond our present understanding.

“ Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Cor. 13: 12.)

The same thought circles round “ **HIS inheritance** in the saints.” What a glorious inheritance that must be, if it is shared with Him, for we share with Him what is His, as Man, and the result of His atoning sacrifice. “ **His power** ” is characterized by “ exceeding greatness,” and stands manifested in that greatest act of all, the raising of our Lord from the dead, setting Him at God’s right hand, far above principalities and power and might and dominion, putting all things under HIS feet, giving Him the headship of all things to the church, which is HIS body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Could there be a greater sweep of glory passing before our entranced gaze than this? We may well meditate upon this theme till it takes possession of our very souls.

The second prayer is **subjective**. It takes up what is formed by the Holy Spirit of God in the saints. The divine desire is that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in **our** hearts by faith, that **we** may be rooted and grounded in love; that **we** may comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, taking in all saints, Jew and Gentile; **length** from divine purpose to glorious fulfilment, from eternity to eternity; **depth**, where our Lord went to, in order to possess Himself of the saints; **height**, the place He has secured for us, and which we shall share with Him. All this is in order that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. Who could imagine such glory, such destiny? It could only come by divine revelation.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE BODY OF CHRIST AND AN HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD

By the use of the word, **body**, in relation to the church of God, God would set forth how very intimate is the relation of the saints to Christ. Nothing can be closer than the members of the human body. A husband and wife form a very close relationship, but they have two wills.

They can separate from each other, and pursue different ways, and be even antagonistic to each other. But the members of the body form vital and integral parts of a living organism. A member of the human body must continue to be livingly united to the whole body, or cease to exist. This is the very striking illustration Scripture employs in connection with the church of God. It sets forth diversity in unity, as we shall see. This is clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 12. There the **whole** human body is used as an illustration of the body of Christ.

So we read, if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were the hearing, where were the smelling? There are many members, but one body. Some members have more important functions, but all are necessary, the most insignificant as well as the prominent and honourable. The conclusion drawn from this is that the members should have the same care one for the other. God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him. Diversity in unity, every member contributing to the health and well-being of the whole, the necessity of each member to be in relation first to the Head in heaven, and then to each other on earth, are the great lessons the Spirit of God would teach us in using the word, **body**, as an illustration of the church.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY AN HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD?

We may begin by getting a helpful idea from the type of Solomon's Temple. That was a gorgeous affair, but the very centre of it was the holiest of all, where God dwelt between the cherubim. You remember doubtless that, when the Temple was dedicated, we read,

"It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord: and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with cloud, even the house of the LORD: so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

(2 Chron. 5: 13, 14.)

Here we get the idea that the Temple at Jerusalem meant the dwelling place of God, the shrine where His glory was seen. It was typical of our Lord. When the Jews were astonished at His saying,

“ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ” (John 2: 19),

they thought He was referring to the Temple on Mount Moriah, which took forty and six years in building. But our Lord spoke of the temple of **His body**, and His disciples remembered His words after He rose from the dead.

But now that the Lord is in Heaven He dwells amongst His people, thus forming “ an holy temple in the Lord.” (Eph. 2: 21.) We read that now

“ The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (Acts 7: 48.)

This holy temple is “ a spiritual house,” not made of great stones and costly, however deftly joined together, but of **living** stones, and of believers brought nigh by the blood of Christ, of saved men and women. No wonder the psalmist, who only had the typical building before him, could exclaim,”

“ Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.”  
(Psalm 93: 5.)

Nothing can be more precious than the thought of God dwelling among His people, and yet nothing can be more solemn. We read:

“ In whom [**Christ**] all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Eph. 2: 21, 22.)

A special word is used here for the word, **temple**. In the Greek language there are two words translated **temple**. **Hieron** is a word used to describe the temple as a whole, precincts and all. Any Jew could go into the court of the Jews. Any Gentile could go into the court of the Gentiles. There were places where cattle and sheep were sold for the sacrifices, and where money changers carried on their

business. All was included under the word, **hieron**.

But there is another word used for temple (Greek, **naos**), indicating the **inner** or more sacred part of the temple, where only the priests could enter, especially the holiest of all, where only the high priest could enter once a year. It was this word the Lord used when He spoke of the temple of His body, referring to His flesh and blood condition as Man on this earth. (John 2: 21.)

The employment of this particular word [Greek **naos**] emphasizes the holy character of God's dwelling place among His people. It is the same word that is used when the body of the believer is viewed as the dwelling place of God's Holy Spirit.

“ Know ye not that ye are the temple [Greek, **naos**] of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple [**naos**] of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple [**naos**] of God is holy, which temple [**naos**] ye are.” (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17.)

What manner of behaviour should be ours in the light of this solemn truth?

## CHAPTER 11

### “ THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT . . . ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING

HERE is indicated the **life** of the body. Just as the human spirit is necessary for the life of the human body, so the Spirit of God is necessary for the life of the body of Christ. The writer James on somewhat similar lines emphasizes this point.

“ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (James 2: 26.)

If the mind of the believer is occupied with the thought of the one body, occupied with the doctrine merely, important as that is, and does not emphasize that the life of the body lies in the Holy Spirit he will have a lifeless body

at best. He will have left out a very vital part of the truth of the body.

Brethren there have been, furnished with good memories, who could reel off with facility every Scripture bearing on the subject of the body of Christ, but who, failing to keep in mind the essential and vital partnership between the one body and the Spirit of God, have used their knowledge disastrously. Addresses without unction were given, the spirit of Diotrophes engendered, resulting in schisms, divisions and factions. Worst of all with swelling words about the one body of Christ, that surely embraces every believer on the Lord, they practically made their little circle of all importance. They would shrink the body of Christ in their minds to the size of their little fragment. With the loudest pretension to be unsectarian, and labelling everyone outside their little circle as being sectarian, they become the worst of sects, saying "I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1: 12), as the badge of a party. If such a sad state of things is possible, and it is, for it actually happened in apostolic times, do we not need the warning to-day? We are assured that we do. If we think we are in no need of such warnings, therein lies our danger of being ensnared by the enemy.

If, however, we duly emphasize the thought of the Holy Spirit as vitally necessary to the life of the one body, and that not in a mere theoretical, but in a practical way, then we grasp what is the mind of the Lord on this subject. If all believers were under the control of the Spirit of God there would be complete and working unity. It would not be a question of agreeing to terms of doctrine, as if that were all, but being subject to the Holy Spirit, seeking not one's own will, but the will of the Lord. It is not that doctrine is of minor importance.

"If any man will do His [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7: 17.)

It is the believer, who is keen to do God's will, that will be truly receptive of the doctrine. The Apostle Paul could say to Timothy,

"Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life." (2 Tim. 3: 10.)

It matters a great deal what we believe as affecting our behaviour.

An illustration of not seeking to do one's own will, and seeking to do the Lord's will, and recognizing that there is one Spirit, may help. A number of soldiers are passing out of their barracks on leave. Each soldier chooses where he will go, and how he will spend his leisure. There is no cohesion in this. These soldiers for the time being are merely individuals. Another day we hear the sound of martial music. A number of soldiers with an officer in charge march out. As they pass out they constitute a **body** of troops. The soldiers on leave did not constitute a **body** of troops, for each soldier followed the bent of his own will. But when no soldier asserts his own will, but all are under obedience to one will, the control of one mind, that of the officer in charge, that constitutes a body of troops. The word of command affects each soldier alike. When the officer shouts, Left turn, each soldier wheels to the left. If the command is, Halt, each soldier ceases marching and comes to attention. **One spirit controls them all.**

So it is with the thought of the one body and the one Spirit. The illustration that Scripture uses of the human body and the human spirit is far closer than the illustration we have given, but it may help to a better understanding of the Scriptural illustration of the one body and the one Spirit.

Then as we all press on our journey there is one hope of our calling. The same future is before each member of the body. To be with Christ, to be like Him, to share His glory, to be His spotless bride, the object of His deep affection, with not one member of the body of Christ missing, this is our calling on high. We are but strangers and pilgrims in a scene that rejected our Lord. This world is a wilderness wide to the believer, who loves his Lord. Let us ever seek to be in conformity to the place to which we are going, to the Person whose likeness we shall bear.

## CHAPTER 12

### “ ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM ”

THE first three we have been considering, “ one body, one Spirit . . . one hope of your calling,” we may call **the circle of reality**. Only true Christians can be indwelt by the Spirit of God. Only true Christians can have the heavenly calling.

The second circle—one Lord, one faith, one baptism—we may call **the circle of profession**. Of course all Christians are professors, but profession should be real. God does not make provision for anything but reality. When profession is not real, it is the work of the enemy. There is alas! much unreality in this circle.

“ While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” (Matt. 13: 25.)

### “ONE LORD”

1 Corinthians 12: 5 throws light on the Lordship of Christ in His assembly.

“ There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.”

The Greek word for administration is **diakonia**, a word describing the work of a servant. The Lord has the disposal of His servants. They are to obey His directions. The servant of the Lord is not under the direction of the assembly, but of the Lord alone. If the servant is true to the directions of the Lord, he will not be found save in fullest harmony with the assembly, as it is found in true relation to Christ, the Head in heaven.

At the same time the lordship of Christ covers the whole life of the believer. He is introduced to this at the very start of his Christian life. He is bidden to “ believe on the LORD Jesus Christ ” for salvation. (Acts 16: 31.) When Saul of Tarsus was suddenly converted on the road to Damascus, his first response was, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9: 6.) If I am not right in my private life, my home life, my business life, in all the

ordinary relationships of life, it is impossible to be right in the assembly. If we seek to be in happy, joyous subjection to the Lord, we shall find His yoke easy, and His burden light. Subjection to Him would settle many problems, where we should go, how we should use our leisure, what we should wear, how we should treat our possessions as stewards of the bounty of the Lord. Individually right with the Lord, the believer will find his true niche and service in the assembly under a lordship exercised in relation to the whole church of God.

### “ONE FAITH ”

The word, **faith**, is used in two ways in Scripture. It is often used to designate the initial act of confidence and trust in the Saviour, that brings with it the knowledge of salvation. It is also used to designate the sum total of Christian doctrine, those foundation truths we are called upon to believe, and which should mould and govern our conduct. The following Scriptures use it in the latter sense:

“ Stand fast in the faith.” (1 Cor. 16: 13.)

“ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”  
(2 Cor. 13: 5.)

“ But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” (Jude 20.)

There is but **one** faith. We should refuse the accretions of men, the addition of creeds that limit the largeness of God’s word, traditions that would neutralize the word of God. In the Holy Scriptures we have

“The faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”  
(Jude 3.)

### “ONE BAPTISM ”

Some think that this refers to the baptism of the Spirit. But this baptism is seen in the previous verse where we read of the “ one body and one Spirit,” for “ by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” (1 Cor. 12, 13.) Moreover the verse, “ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,” clearly points to the circle of **profession**, as the baptism of the Spirit does to the circle of **reality**. “ One baptism ”

clearly refers to baptism by water (Rom. 6: 3—5.) The ONE baptism stands in contrast to the baptism of John the Baptist, “ the baptism of repentance, to all the people of Israel ” (Acts 13: 24.)

Christian baptism would not be practised till our Lord had completed the work of atonement on the cross and had ascended triumphant to the right hand of God. So we read,

“ We are buried with Him [**Christ**] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6: 4.)

At Ephesus the Apostle Paul came across certain believers, who, when challenged, had not even heard of the Holy Ghost, whereupon Paul asked them, “ Unto what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19: 3.) They replied, “ Unto John’s baptism.” Paul then said,

“ John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus.”  
(Acts 19: 4.)

This incident clearly proves that John’s baptism was **preparatory**. When these disciples heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul laid hands upon them, they received the Holy Spirit, and spoke with tongues, and prophesied.

Since the Day of Pentecost when the church was formed, there has been only one baptism, **Christian** baptism.

### “ ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL ”

Ephesians 4: 4—6 presents three circles.

- (1) The circle of **reality**—“ One body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling.”
- (2) The circle of **profession**—“ One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.”
- (3) The circle of that which is **universal**—“ One God and Father of all.”

God is described as

“ The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.” (Isa. 57: 15.)

He is everywhere, and out of Him there is nothing. Is it not passing wonderful that He who inhabiteth eternity is pleased to dwell

“ With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones ”? (Isa. 57: 15.)

What a contrast, to think that the One, who is supreme as Creator, in whom all creation inheres and subsists, should stoop down in infinite grace to a contrite sinner, and be pleased to dwell in his heart.

We are reminded here that God is the Father of many families besides the Lord's people forming the church of God. We read,

“ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family [literally, **every family**] in heaven and earth is named.”  
(Eph. 3: 14, 15.)

There are evidently many families—angelic, Old Testament saints, etc.—that can be headed under the Fatherhood of God, though that title does not apply to the fallen human race. They are described as “ children of disobedience,” also as “ children of wrath.” (Eph. 2: 2, 3.) We are told that there is

“ One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. 4: 6.)

He is “ above all.” He is supreme. All power belongs to Him,

“ Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”  
(1 Tim. 6: 15, 16.)

He is “ through all.” His work is everywhere and there is no blessing, but what comes from His hand.

We also read, “ He is in you all.” Every mark of spiritual goodness is the result of His work in our souls. Every spiritual activity comes from Him, is sustained by Him, is for His glory. It is all summed up in the words,

“ For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”  
(Rom. 11: 36.)

## CHAPTER 13

### THE ASCENDED CHRIST HAS GIVEN GIFTS TO MEN

THERE are three outstanding chapters taking up the subject of spiritual gifts as bestowed by our Lord, viz.: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4.

Romans 12 presents the subject of spiritual gift in relation **to the house of God**, and whilst including the exercise of the very highest and spiritual gifts, goes down to details such as relieving the necessities of saints, and the showing of Christian hospitality in the home. There is room for all to share in these Christian graces. GOD is the prominent name in the chapter. It is **the house of God** that is in view.

1 Corinthians 12 presents the subject of gift in its practical exercise **in the assembly**. THE HOLY SPIRIT is the prominent name in this chapter, seeing that all activity in the assembly is by the Holy Spirit of God. So we read of the Spirit "dividing to every man severally as He will." (1 Cor. 12: 11.) "As He will" asserts the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, an attribute only shared by the Father and the Son in the unity of the Godhead.

Ephesians 4 presents the subject of spiritual gifts from the standpoint of the counsels of God, and the working of them out to a glorious consummation till the moment comes when

"We all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

(Eph. 4: 13.)

It is a most wonderful conception, and the working of it out from start to finish is a wonderful tribute to God's wisdom and power. The prominent name in this chapter is LORD or CHRIST. We read,

"When He [Christ] ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4: 8.)

Our Lord gave "gifts unto men." The church is not a society intended to be immured between four walls. No, the word of the risen Lord was,

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."  
(Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

Spiritual power lies in the Christian being here for God, separate in heart and ways from the world that crucified our Lord, yet accessible, like his blessed Master, in being available to meet the sorrows and spiritual needs of this world. The church sadly descends from her high estate when she becomes worldly, and political, merely pledged to social schemes for the betterment of the world, especially when the Gospel of the grace of God and the ministry of the word of God are relegated to the background. Unless these are kept in the foreground there will be a sad lack of spiritual power. A worldly church is a dead church, a stumbling block to the unbeliever, but lives that are truly Christian, lived by men and women going about undoing the works of the devil, will make their mark for God in this world, as nothing else will. General Smuts never uttered a truer word than when he said that we do not need a New World Order, but the teaching of the Bible, truly lived out.

It is interesting to note that in Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians 12, a gift is bestowed on the individual, so that we can say that certain persons have gifts from the Lord. But in Ephesians 4 the individual himself is a gift from the Lord to men. Five gifts are specially enumerated in Ephesians 4: 11.

APOSTLES, specially applied to the twelve apostles, whom the Lord chose, and sent out on their mission, and afterwards to the Apostle Paul as "one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15: 8.) They first gave their testimony to Israel as to the gospel of the kingdom, but when our Lord was risen and glorified the church came into existence, and was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. So we

find the apostles' work in their oral ministry, and later in the case of the Apostles Paul, Peter and John, in their writings.

**PROPHETS**, those who speak "to edification, and exhortation and comfort." (1 Cor. 14: 3.) We must be careful not to confound these with the Old Testament prophets. They were New Testament prophets, given a special place along with the apostles in the laying of the foundation of the church, as we have shown before.

**EVANGELISTS**, men, who characteristically announce glad tidings, the gospel of the grace of God, to perishing men in the power of the Spirit of God that results in conversions. Ephesians 4 is the only Scripture where the evangelist is mentioned as a gift. One can readily understand why this is so. In Romans 12 the house of God is in question, which clearly is not the sphere of the service of the evangelist, for all in the true house of God are saved, and do not need the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 12 the assembly in its practical working is viewed. The evangelist surely, as a believer, has as much place in the house of God, and in the assembly, as any other believer, but the sphere of His service is clearly outside the assembly, and in the world of sinners. He goes far and wide in his search for sinners for Christ, who, when saved, are "added to the church." (Acts 2: 47.)

Someone has happily likened the evangelist to a pair of compasses with a fixed leg and a movable leg, the latter sweeping in a wide circle. The evangelist, as it were, should have his fixed leg in the assembly. He should be in happy relation to the assembly. Yet he is not the servant of the assembly, but of the Lord, and under His Lord's directions, and not under the control of the assembly. Yet, if the evangelist works under the lordship of Christ, and the assembly is in right relation to the Lord, there will be complete harmony between the evangelist and the assembly. His converts will find their place in the assembly, and help to build it up in a very happy way, and give work to the pastor and teacher.

**PASTORS**, shepherds, feeders of sheep. A shepherd brings before one's mind the thought of one, who knows each sheep individually, one who loves and cares for the

flock of God. Psalm 23 is a fine example of this. There we have the example of Jehovah, keeping the sheep from straying, guarding them from their enemies, caring for them by leading them to green pastures and beside still waters. How good it is that the Lord in glory, the chief Shepherd, puts it into the hearts of one and another of His own to care for the sheep. When He appears He will give to such "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5: 4.) What is done for Christ abides for ever.

TEACHERS, those able to unfold the word of God, to make plain the principles of Scripture. This is a very precious gift. The pastor is more like the nurse, the teacher like the schoolmaster. The Apostle Paul speaks of his own gift as a pastor, when he says,

"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." (1 Thess. 2: 7.)

It is good for the saints to grow in the things of the Lord, to grow out of, as it were, the infant's class, and get among the more advanced pupils. The Apostle Paul seems to show this when he wrote to the Hebrew believers,

"When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. 5: 12—14.)

Someone has said, that till a Christian understands the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13); the seven addresses to the churches in Asia (Rev. 2 and 3), the seven feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23), he has not got far in divine knowledge. How far can we stand this simple test? These gifts are

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."  
(Eph. 4: 12.)

## CHAPTER 14

### THE HEAD IN RELATION TO THE BODY

WHAT is meant by this illustration? What is the relation between the Head and the body? What are the functions of the Head to the body, and the body to the Head. These are questions we seek to answer briefly.

It was said in derision of Christians, who sought to gather to the Lord's name in simplicity, and in obedience to the word of God, that they had strong arms and legs, but no head. That there were strong legs and arms was in reality the admission that there was a good healthy head. The amputation of an arm or a leg does not necessarily imperil life, but a headless body is a dead body. These critics made the mistake of not looking high enough. They looked in the wrong direction. They might look to Rome to see the head of the Romish system. They might look to Canterbury to see the head of the Anglican system. They might look to Edinburgh to see the head of the Presbyterian system. They might look in this earthly direction or that for the head of this system or that.

Where was the Head of these despised Christians, who had strong legs and arms, but no head? For that you would have to **look up to Heaven**, and see the only HEAD that Scripture recognizes as the Head of His church, even our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of God. With such a Head, acknowledged and responded to, it was no wonder that these believers had strong legs and arms.

A little thought as to the human body in relation to the human head will help to answer our questions. There can be no movement of the human body save under the direction of the human head. See that great musician. His audience sits entranced as he fills the air with the sound of ravishing music. His fingers fly at lightning speed over the ivory keys. Each lightning action is the result of the brain telegraphing to the fingers what chords to strike. A hundred such telegrams have passed through the nerves of his body in an incredibly short space of time. Or take the exercise of walking. The movement of both legs, the swinging of the arms, the eyes noting the road, the ears warning of oncoming traffic to be avoided, and much besides, are all synchronized in the act of walking. The

head directs, the members of the body respond.

And this is the illustration that Scripture employs to show the wonderful connection by the Spirit of God between the Divine Head in heaven and the members of His body on the earth. Thus we learn that one of the great functions of the Head in heaven is to **direct**, and the function of the members on the earth is to **respond** to the Divine instructions.

Another function of the Head is to furnish spiritual and heavenly nourishment to the body on earth, maintaining it thereby in health and strength. The following Scriptures make this abundantly plain.

“ From whom [**Christ, the Head in heaven**] the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which **every joint supplieth**, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Eph. 4: 16.)

“ [**Christ**] . . . the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having **nourishment ministered**, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”  
(Col. 2: 19.)

The “ joints and bands ” refer to the channels through which the Head in heaven is pleased to minister spiritual nourishment to His members on the earth, through the agency of the gifts He bestows on His church, and of the members of the body generally. Just as in nature the human head is that part of the human body from which nourishment flows to every part of the body, so spiritual nourishment flows from the Head in heaven through the “ joints and bands,” and by “ the body . . . edifying . . . itself in love.”

Even the Psalms know something akin to this, foreshadowing this great truth. We read,

“ Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.” (Psalm 133: 1, 2.)

Oil in the Old Testament is typical of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is called the

“unction” (I John 2: 20), and the “anointing” (I John 2: 27). In this beautiful Psalm we get an illustration of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the ointment descending from Aaron’s head, down to his beard, and thence to the skirts of his garments. The Spirit of God descended from the Head in heaven to indwell all the members of Christ’s body on earth. Descending to Aaron’s beard may set forth the way that our Lord conferred the Spirit first on His apostles, and then the Spirit being bestowed upon every believer answers to the precious ointment reaching the skirts of Aaron’s garments.

So we find that the apostles, companying with the Lord, seeing Him with their eyes, hearing Him, observing Him, produced a first fellowship, which is “with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” (I John 1: 3.) This fellowship was passed on to the rest of the believers, that their joy might be full, and continues to this day.

Many alas! have neutralized to a very large extent the happy relation of direction, nourishment and supply between the Head in heaven and the members of Christ’s body on the earth by introducing human organizations, and thus stifling the free action of the Spirit of God, especially by the introduction of one-man ministry, thus establishing a priestly caste, limiting very largely the activity of the Spirit to one individual. This results in setting aside what others might happily supply for the good of the whole, if the Spirit were left free to act, as is His prerogative.

## CHAPTER 15

### WHAT IS MEANT BY “NOT HOLDING THE HEAD”?

THE explanation as to this will serve to make clear more fully the few remarks just made as to how human organization in the things of God sets aside the truth of God as to the practical working of the assembly.

In Colossians 2 there is given a plain warning against

two tendencies, which are alas! too evident in the professing church to-day. These two tendencies are Rationalism and Ritualism. These are the two departures from the truth of God, that have put God's people out of touch with the Head in Heaven. Rationalism is seen in the working of the fleshly mind in the things of God, daring to sit in judgment on God's word. Ritualism is seen in the sensuous appeal to the eye and ear to satisfy the mind of the flesh with forms and ceremonies, a pseudo-religion, the very dope of the Devil.

Here is the warning against Rationalism:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

(Col. 2: 8.)

Christendom has been largely ruined through disregard of this warning. Instead of cleaving closely to the teaching of Scripture, men have allowed their minds to work on the mysteries of the Christian faith, especially as to the Person of our adorable Lord, round which the great controversies of the church revolved for centuries, with very evil results. Take the ravages made by Modernism and Higher Criticism, whereby many have been completely unsettled as to the very fundamentals of the Christian faith. No wonder the Apostle describes such things as "vain deceit," as being "after the tradition of men" and not "after Christ." What would guard the believer against this snare would be the appreciation that

"In Him [**Christ**] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2: 9.)

Christians have all they need in Christ. There is a wonderful fulness in Him that suffices for every spiritual need and desire of the believer. What more do we want?

"Ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power." (Col. 2: 10.)

Nor were the Corinthian believers holding the Head when they ranged themselves round party leaders, labelling themselves by their names, getting their eyes on their fellow-believers, instead of by faith on the Head in heaven.

Nor must we think that the danger does not exist to-day in circles greatly favoured in the goodness of God by the preservation of the truth of God in their midst. The evil reared its head in apostolic times. It can be seen all around us to-day.

Even true ministers of the word may turn aside in their desire to appear learned, seeking to impress their hearers with high sounding philosophical terms and scientific phrases, thinking in their folly to add conviction to the pure word of God by a parade of worldly learning. What a contrast was found in the Apostle Paul when he addressed the Corinthians, steeped as they were in their heathen philosophies. He wrote to them :

“ I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified . . . and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2 : 2—5.)

Further Colossians 2 warns us against Ritualism. It is very noticeable that when men depart from the simplicity of Scripture, unless they turn their back upon the faith altogether, they seek to make up for that departure by adopting forms and ceremonies, in erecting ornate buildings designed to make a sensuous appeal to sight and hearing and emotional temperaments. These are largely copied from the Old Testament where we are told that the Tabernacle and its worship were but “ a shadow of things to come ” (Col. 2 : 17). There is no substance in a shadow. When the Substance arrives, the shadows are valueless. Those, who go on with the shadows, thereby proclaim that they do not recognise the Substance, for we read that “ the body is of Christ.” (Col. 2 : 17.) To go on with the shadows is to divert them from their true and proper use, for they were but pointers to the coming One, even the Lord Jesus. So we read,

“ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind, and NOT HOLDING THE HEAD.”  
(Col. 2 : 18, 19.)

Ritualism is alas! the great feature to-day, seen in its height in Rome, and in a lesser degree down to the smallest dissenting chapel. The trend to ritualism is decidedly increasing, and is one of the sinister signs of the last days. We have seen pictures of Protestant bishops in gorgeous robes of various hues, adorned with mitre, pastoral staff, episcopal ring, far removed from the simplicity of the Scriptures.

The effect of all that we have been considering as to Rationalism and Ritualism is to rob the church of God of spiritual power. The clergy are at their wits' end in their schemes to recover what has been lost. They try committees, organizations, human efforts, instead of getting down on their knees in tearful and contrite confession of their sin before God in these matters.

This then is "not holding the Head," that Christians should allow doctrines and practices foreign to the word of God, displacing Christ from His supreme place as Head of His church, His body. In Christ there is finality, none above Him, none before Him, none after Him. He is the only Saviour, the only High Priest of our profession, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Rev. 1: 8.)

"[God] hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."  
(Eph. 1: 22, 23.)

What room is there for anything outside of Christ? To add to Christ, to take from Christ, is to have no Christ at all. He will not give His glory to another.

Colossians 1 is a great, outstanding chapter, setting forth the glories of the Son of God become Man, and dying for man's salvation on the cross of Calvary. He is "the First-born of every creature." (Col. 1: 15.) As such He is pre-eminent. He is the Creator of all things, all things created by Him and for Him. He was before all things, and all things consist or inhere in Him. He is "the First-born from [among] the dead" (Col. 1: 18), introducing us into the realm of new creation. As such He is Head of the body, the church, that in all things He might have the pre-

eminence. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. What room have we for "philosophy and vain deceit," if such a vision fills our souls? Let us seek to hold the Head.

And in seeking to hold the Head, we hold each other, **and in no other way.** Those, who truly hold the Head will be bound in the closest and the richest practical Christian fellowship with all, who **do** so.

## CHAPTER 16

### " ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE "

IN the exhortation to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we have a tacit acknowledgment, that as Christians, we have elements in us that may make walking together in Christian fellowship difficult and testing. We must ever remember that we, Christians, have the flesh in us as long as we are in this world. It is the activity of the flesh that brings in discord. The Apostle Paul besought the Corinthian saints to speak the same thing, and that there should be no divisions among them. (1 Cor. 1: 10.) The Apostle John rebuked Diotrophes for loving to have the pre-eminence, and for his malicious words. (3 John 9, 10.) We all know the deep importance of this exhortation to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let each Christian reader pay earnest attention to it.

It is clear that we have to be right individually, if we are to be right with our brethren. We are exhorted to "all lowliness and meekness." (Eph. 4: 2.) Lowliness is having low thoughts of self. John the Baptist is a good example of this. He described himself as "the **voice** of one crying in the wilderness" (John 1: 23), and again "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3: 30.) He hid behind the glory of his Master. The Apostle John was a good example too. He described himself in the gospel that he wrote as "the disciple, whom Jesus loved." (John

21: 20.) In his first epistle he does not give his name, and in his short personal epistles no name is given, but he speaks of himself as "the elder." The opposite of humility is pride, which is called in Scripture "the snare of the devil." (1 Tim. 3: 7.) We feel sure those, who have had a true vision of the perfect One, who was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11: 29), could never be anything but humble.

Then we are exhorted to meekness, which means a disposition slow to take offence. How much trouble would be avoided in the church of God, if the flesh were not so ready to move the believer to self-assertion when slighted or offended. Self-assertion is often like lighting a match in a powder magazine. Enumerated in the list of "the fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness." (Gal. 5: 22, 23.) Our Lord was "lowly in heart," who

"When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2: 23.)

When it is a question of the Lord's honour, we are to maintain it firmly, but when it is something personal to ourselves we are exhorted to meekness.

The next exhortation has reference to our conduct towards our fellow Christians, who may be trying and difficult to get on with. Our conduct to such is to be "with long suffering, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. 4: 2.) Longsuffering does not mean to bear something once or twice, and then think we have done nobly, but to be prepared to put up with a trying brother or sister for years, if needs be. The difficult thing is to forbear IN LOVE. We get an example in this when Peter asked the Lord if he should forgive his brother, who had sinned against him, up to seven times. Our Lord replied, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." (Matt. 18: 22.)

We have seen a brother with tight lips and menacing manner say to another, "I forgive you, but I will never forget." There was no trace of love in this. It is easy to see what is right, but it takes very great grace to practice these precepts. Would it not be a wholesome practice when ruffled and tried, not to sit down and write a scorching

letter in the heat of the moment, but instead to read 1 Corinthians 13, that great love chapter, where we read of long suffering and being kind, not easily provoked, thinking no evil, and then kneel down and ask grace to practice it?

Now we come to the great exhortation to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Note carefully it does not tell us to keep the unity of **the one body**. "There **is** ONE body." That is very definite. It is formed by the Spirit of God, is vital, and embraces every believer on the face of the earth. The unity of the Spirit is a **practical** matter. As we have already pointed out, it is possible to have doctrine before us, and imagine we are keeping Christian unity, and it may degenerate into casting out of our fellowship every brother and sister, who cannot pronounce shibboleth to our liking, or who does not agree to every doctrine, the leaders may advance. Scripture exhorts us to keep the unity **OF THE SPIRIT**. If every brother and sister were animated by the one Spirit how harmonious things would be.

The Greek word for **endeavour** is **to make haste or speed**. It means evidently a **real effort** by the grace of God and in the Spirit's power, to keep this precious unity. The believer cannot take himself out of the unity of the one body, but he can take himself practically out of the unity the Spirit has formed. He may be in his own spirit out of the current of the Spirit's activity in relation to the assembly. For instance if a brother or sister stays away from the meeting because someone has given offence, as far as that person is concerned, the unity of the Spirit is ignored. The unity of the Spirit truly remains, but such an one is outside of it practically, and will never be truly happy till he is restored in spirit. Or a brother or sister might still come to the meetings, but in a sulky spirit, out of touch with the Lord and His people, and thus the unity of the Spirit as touching that brother or sister would not be kept.

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

To the Apostle Paul was given the high honour of making known the fellowship of the mystery. We read in this connection that

“ THE GENTILES should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I [Paul] was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.” (Eph. 3: 6, 7.)

It was truly wonderful to see Jew and Gentile believers forgetting the centuries-old animosity of their unconverted days, sitting down at the Lord's table in happy fellowship. No animosity can be more hateful than that of religious flesh, but there it was seen to be replaced by LOVE in the Spirit. Social distinctions faded away in their adoration of Christ. We see Onesimus, the runaway slave, sitting at the same Lord's table with Philemon, his owner and master. Converted through Paul when in chains in Rome, and sent back to his master, he was received “ Not now as a servant [slave], but above a servant [slave], A BROTHER BELOVED.” (Philemon 16.) Here is communion without communism. Distinctions of race and place disappeared in the presence of their Lord. What a sight for heaven and earth. We read:

“ To the intent that NOW unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” (Eph. 3: 10.)

The Greek word for “ manifold ” is **polupoikilos**, meaning **much variegated** (Liddell and Scott), or as Darby's New Translation renders it, “ **the all-various wisdom of God.**” It is one of Paul's superlative words in this epistle of superlative words. Principalities and powers look on the wondrous scene of this fellowship of the mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world. There is no fellowship like it. It takes no heed of frontiers or languages, or of colour of the skin. The writer remembers sitting down at the Lord's supper in the United States. There were present Americans, English, Scotch, Irish, German, French, Swedish, Russian and Jewish brethren. What but

Divine power could fuse men of different nationalities, so as to give them one spirit and one mind, thus losing all distinctions of class and race in their adoration of their common Lord? Here we see the secret of the New World Order that politicians are clamouring for. Sad indeed it is that schisms, divisions, sects, parties should spoil this wonderful object lesson to principalities and powers in the heavenly place.

“ AS HE WILL ”

These words have been haunting the writer as he pens these lines. Christendom has disregarded these words to its immense loss. Men are placed in religious positions by men. Man ordains man, and nothing but confusion comes of it. Spurgeon spoke scathingly of empty hands being placed on empty heads. What does Scripture say as to it?

“ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

(1 Cor. 12: 4—6.)

“ But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally AS HE WILL.”

(1 Cor. 12: 11.)

Here it is what God does, not man. The Spirit gives to one the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another miraculous gifts, to another prophecy, to another the gift of tongues. “ AS HE WILL ” covers all this. It is the assertion of sovereignty, an essential attribute only predicated of Deity.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE APPOINTMENT OF BISHOPS AND DEACONS

IN the early church bishops and deacons were appointed by the apostles for the work of the Lord in the assembly. In considering this subject the reader must dismiss from his mind the style of bishops that obtain in Romish and

Anglican circles. By paying attention to the way in which the subject is presented in Scripture the right idea of the Spirit of God as to the office of a bishop will be gained. The word, **bishop**, means an overseer, and is sometimes used in exchange for the word, **elder**. Several bishops might be appointed to one assembly. It is clear there were more than one in the assembly at Philippi (Phil. 1: 1.)

The character and qualifications of a bishop or overseer are given to us in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7, and Titus 1: 5-9, whilst the Apostle Peter gives us a very illuminating description of a bishop or elder.

“ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

(1 Peter 5: 1-4.)

Out of this happy, simple idea ecclesiasticism has alas! reared its head. Bishops in Bible days were elder brethren with spiritual and moral qualities that fitted them to take oversight of the assembly, and to shepherd the flock of God. They were elder brethren among their brethren.

We find the bishops of to-day drawing handsome emoluments, living in palaces, controlling hundreds of clergy. They stand in such marked contrast to the bishops of the Bible that Dean Alford, an Anglican divine, was constrained to make the remark that the bishops of the Bible were one thing, and the bishops of to-day quite another.

The bishops of the Bible were not to be lords over God’s heritage. The bishops of to-day are addressed as, My Lord. It is curious that the Greek word for **heritage** is **Klērōs**, from which is derived the word **clergy**. The word, **clergy**, denotes a priestly caste of which the Bible knows nothing. God’s **Klērōs** embraced all believers.

One can understand why the apostles had the power to appoint bishops or elders. Christianity was in its infancy. The apostles were specially chosen by the Lord to super-

intend the practical working of the infant church. They were competent to choose men of spiritual weight and character, able to feed the flock of God, and to guide the assembly by their wise counsel.

It is to be noted carefully that there are no instructions as to the appointing of bishops or elders **after** apostolic days. Was it that the Divine mind saw that declension would develop in the church of God, that things would develop into mere officialdom with spiritual discernment and spiritual power at a very low ebb, as we see all around us to-day? Moreover, if the church should break up into fragments, which fragment would have the exclusive right to appoint bishops? Would not terrible confusion set in? Alas! Rome wrongfully lays claim to succession. There is no authority for apostolic succession in the Scriptures. The apostle and prophets, the foundation of the church, pass away, once that foundation was laid.

Whilst there is no provision made for the appointment of bishops or elders after apostolic days, the fact that the moral and spiritual qualifications of such are carefully given to us, indicates that whilst no **official** appointment can be made to-day, yet men with these qualifications may be discovered. In an assembly where there are found grave and godly elder brethren, with such qualities as those enumerated in 1 Timothy and Titus, they should be gladly recognized, and their words and advice have weight and helpfulness.

It is to be noted that whilst gift is for the whole church, that is, a teacher is a teacher wherever he goes among the assemblies, the office of a bishop was **local**, that is, a bishop at Philippi was a bishop there, and nowhere else.

As to the deacons, this is a word that has acquired an ecclesiastical meaning foreign to the word of God. The Greek word for deacon, **diakonos**, simply means a **servant**, a **waiting man**, a **messenger**. It was the ordinary word for any one serving whether in an exalted or in a menial capacity. Out of this ordinary word has been coined the word, **deacon**, indicating in church circles to-day, a person with a religious status, giving the word an ecclesiastical meaning with no warrant from Scripture.

We have instructions as to the character of these deacons

or servants of the assembly in 1 Timothy 3: 8—13. This is to be noted, as they evidently had to do with the secular or business side of the assembly, serving tables (Acts 6: 2), as the apostles described it, in contrast to their own more spiritual work of ministering the word of God. The work of the deacons would cover such duties as caring for the poor, attending to the comfort of the assembly in their comings together, etc. The wives of the deacons are specially mentioned, as they might usefully assist their husbands in such work. The wives had to be grave, not slanderers, faithful in all things.

There is a great need for sober men to be raised up, who will care for the welfare of the assembly. Good it is when God puts the care of His own upon the hearts of such.

## CHAPTER 19

### THE DISCIPLINE OF THE ASSEMBLY

THERE is a "within" in relation to the assembly. We read,

"Do not ye judge them that are **within**? But them that are **without** God judgeth." (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13.)

"Without" is the sphere of the world. The Christian has to leave the judgment of the world to God. It is not the Christian's sphere to interfere in that which is "without." "Vengeance is **Mine**; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12: 19.)

"Within" is the sphere of the assembly. The assembly should be marked by holiness. Saints are called "an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2: 21), a place where God dwells, and holiness becomes His house.

Discipline has to be maintained in the house of God. We need to carefully gather from Scripture what form it takes, and who come under its action. We might be slack, and allow what would greatly weaken the testimony of God, or we might be hard and exacting beyond what Scripture warrants. There is always a temptation to

religious flesh to mount the judgment seat, which is not of God.

We get instructions as to discipline in 1 Corinthians 5. In that assembly there was a man guilty of horrible incest. The Corinthian saints, brought up in all the licentiousness, which was associated with pagan worship, were not grieved and concerned about this evil in their midst. They needed instruction from God, and receiving it, the whole church has had the advantage of it to this present time. The Apostle Paul brought before them the deep seriousness of the matter. He instructed them to excommunicate this man guilty of such wickedness. He exhorts them to

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.” (1 Cor. 5: 7.)

Characteristically in God's sight they were unleavened, that being so, let them be unleavened practically. Let their condition answer to what they were in God's sight on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ for them on the cross. The object of this summary judgment was

“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 5: 5.)

Excommunication was a fearful thing in those days. The “within” was the sphere where God was known, and whence the light of His truth radiated. The “without” meant the world of paganism and Judaism, Satan's sphere. One might have thought the excommunication of this sinning saint would have been for his destruction. But, no, it was for the destruction **of the flesh**. It was that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The discipline of the house of God is for the blessing and recovery of the one disciplined. Excommunication is a solemn matter at any time, but in apostolic days to be outside the assembly of God upon earth was to be outside everything Christian, and to be thrown into Satan's sphere. That the discipline of the Lord, which may come in connection with assembly discipline, is for ultimate blessing, is plainly taught in Scripture. We read:

“When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

(1 Cor. 11, 32.)

We are happily able to follow the wholesome effect of the discipline meted out to this incestuous man. The Apostle Paul wrote a second epistle to the assembly at Corinth, and referred at length to this case. The first epistle had its due effect in bringing the Corinthian saints to a deep sense of the sin in their midst. The Apostle could write:

“ Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”  
(2 Cor. 7: 11.)

It appears the Corinthian saints had almost gone too far in their zeal, as previously they had been too slack. The man had repented of his sin, and had been restored to the Lord. The Corinthian saints had to be exhorted to forgive him, to comfort him, to confirm their love to him. (2 Cor. 2: 7, 8.) The flesh likes to be hard oftentimes. It takes the Holy Spirit of God, the spirit of love and grace, and yet faithfulness to the Lord, to lead us to restore an erring one, who has sinned and repented. It is easier to cut off than to restore, easier to pull down than to build.

It is very helpful that the inspired page sets before us what are the departures from holiness that call for excommunication. We read:

“ I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”  
(1 Cor. 5: 11.)

This is a serious list we are given, and it forms a guide for us in this solemn matter. Discipline might be carried out too harshly. Not every wrong demands excommunication. Timothy is instructed by the Apostle Paul, “ Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” (1 Tim. 5: 20.) Evidently the sin was not of such a grave nature as to call for excommunication, a public rebuke sufficed, and it would help those, who heard it, to avoid a similar sin. Again we read of the Apostle giving instructions, that if a man was overtaken in a fault, the spiritual

among them was to restore such an one, remembering that they too might be tempted. (Gal. 6: 1.) So, too, the writer James exhorted that we should confess our faults one to another, and to pray for one another, that healing may be ours. (James 5: 16.) Again we read,

“ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

(James 5: 19, 20.)

These Scriptures show there has to be patience and grace in some cases, and in others, not excommunication, but an open rebuke.

We have helpful instructions scattered through the word of God, on this subject. We read:

“ We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” (2 Thess. 3: 6.)

“ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Rom. 16: 17, 18.)

These instructions are plain enough.

There is one last Scripture, however, we would call attention to. It relates to heretical teaching as to the Person of our adorable Lord. The aged Apostle John, writing to a lady and her children, tells them how gravely the Holy Spirit of God viewed such teaching. It is well known that these heretical teachings were very rife in the first centuries of the church's history, and they continue to this day. We read:

“ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 9—11.)

It is not sufficient for the Christian to be clear personally of this evil teaching, for it is subversive of Christianity, but he must be clear also of the **person**, who teaches it. Anyone personally clear of the evil teaching, and yet remaining in fellowship with the teacher of this evil doctrine, is a partaker of his evil deeds, and therefore has to be refused, even as the author of the heretical teaching himself.

The Lord give us spiritual zeal for the holiness of God's house, hearts that will yearn after, and bowels of compassion that will feel for the erring, the disorderly, the sinning, and give us grace to welcome the repentant saint, and to confirm our love to him.

## CHAPTER 20

### THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

The church of God is moving on to a grand goal, to the glorious time when our Lord shall present His church to Himself, as we read,

“ Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5: 25—27.)

Here we get the grand hope of the church, the consummation of all her desires, even to be presented to her Lord as His spotless bride with exceeding joy, to be like Him, to be with Him for ever. This will be better even than Pentecost. The end is more glorious than the beginning. What a tribute to the power and patience of our Lord that in spite of all the evil that has corrupted the church of God, our Lord will have a bride suitable to Himself. Sure it is that the enemy has done his best all down the centuries to destroy the testimony to the Lord, but Christ's building on the confession of His name shall

never be destroyed, the gates of **Hades** shall never prevail against His church.

The great moment of the church's triumph will be when the Lord shouts the assembling shout at His second coming, when in response every sleeping saint will arise, and every living saint changed, and ALL together caught up to be with the Lord for ever. (John 14: 1—3; 1 Thess. 4: 13—18.)

Some would-be expositors of the word teach that the church in **its entirety** will not be caught up at the second coming of Christ, that unfaithful Christians will be left behind to go through the great tribulation, and only the faithful Christians will be caught up.

It can be easily proved from Scripture that this teaching is quite unscriptural. The Corinthian assembly was far from perfect. There were in it factions and parties. They had in their midst a shocking case of immorality, and did not mourn over it. Saint was going to law with his fellow saint to their great discredit. Some were guilty of evil teaching, viz.: denying the resurrection of the body. Some forgot the sacred character of the Lord's supper, so far as to make it an occasion for carousals and getting intoxicated. So great was the scandal that many of their number were weak and sickly, and many were removed by the hand of death in the government of God, as not fit to render testimony to the Lord on earth. If ever there was a moment to say that only the faithful would be raptured to glory at our Lord's second coming, here surely was the occasion to do it.

Imagine for a moment that you were present when the Apostle Paul's inspired letter was read for the first time to the gathered saints. With what shame they would listen to the enumeration of their shortcomings and sinful practices. If they knew that the coming of the Lord would be alluded to in this epistle, how intense would be their listening, and how great would be their wonderment whether some of their number had forfeited their hope of being caught up by our Lord at His coming.

But not a word do they hear of a partial rapture, of an incomplete church being caught up. On the contrary, to their surprise and relief they hear these words:

“ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not ALL sleep, but we shall ALL be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and WE shall be changed.”

(1 Cor. 15: 51, 52.)

One would think that this passage is plain beyond words. **ALL means ALL**. There are no qualifications whatsoever. No hint of any distinction between saint and saint. It might be urged by those who teach the partial rapture theory, that “ a moment ” might mean a lengthened period of time, just as “ the accepted time ” has lasted for nearly two thousand years. The Scripture, however, defines how brief this moment is, even “ the twinkling of an eye,” which takes less than a second to accomplish. It would be senseless to think of discrimination in such a short space of time. Further the Apostle Paul joined himself with these Corinthian believers, saying, “ WE shall ALL be changed.”

Moreover, if saints on earth are to be discriminated against as being unfaithful, to be consistent the same process must be carried out with the dead in Christ. One has never yet heard of a partial rapture teacher advocating this latter, and yet it is obvious that if the one were true, the other would be.

Romans 8, alluding to the second coming of Christ, speaks of “ the redemption of our body ” (verse 23). The fact of the word “ **redemption** ” being used in this connection takes the subject out of the region of responsibility, and places it on the ground of the sovereignty of God, and of the efficacy of the atoning work of Christ. ALL believers, thank God, stand on common ground here.

At the very end of the Book of Revelation we read,

“ And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.”

(Rev. 22: 17.)

“ He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

(Rev. 22: 20.)

What a moment of surpassing joy it will be when our Lord calls His bride to His side. What a joy when we shall behold Him, when we are like Him, and with Him for

ever, when the church shall be presented to Him without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, when every trace of sin's sad story shall give place to the glorious perfection of new creation.

## CHAPTER 21

### DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LAST DAYS

IN the inspired epistles we can see how troubles began in the early church. We see how party strife was rampant in the Corinthian assembly. The Apostle Paul could delineate the way "the latter times" (1 Tim. 4: 1) would bring in evil—such as spiritualism—like a flood; whilst also he tells us of the last days when "perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3: 1). How terrible must have been the Apostle's grief when he could say, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1: 15), those very assemblies that he had formed by his own ministry, the very core of the work of God at that time.

Yet up to the very end of the Apostle's life, though we find all this evil fermenting, there was no OPEN division on record. We get great help as to what is to happen in the future when we study the addresses to the seven churches in Asia. (Rev. 2 and 3.) Looked at from the prophetic standpoint we find the stage of church history represented by Ephesus succeeded by that represented by Smyrna, and then by that represented by Pergamos, till we come to that represented by Thyatira. Of course the sad condition of Christendom in the early centuries was represented by one testimony. But there arose a conflict within the bosom of the Church. The Bishop of Constantinople sought to be the supreme head of Christendom. The bishop of Rome likewise claimed to be the supreme head, the successor of St. Peter. This resulted in the professing church at that time being divided into East and West; East bowing to the headship of the bishop of

Constantinople; the West bowing to the supremacy of the pope at Rome.

The Eastern Church, finding its adherents mostly in Greece and Russia, was named the **Greek** Church from its geographical distribution; the **Orthodox** church from its vindication of dogma. The Greek church is opposed to many of the doctrine and practices of the Romish church. Both have been and are persecuting churches.

It is very clear that this cleavage points to the fulfilment of prophecy. If the testimony of Christendom were marked by only one religion, when the rising up on the one hand of the Romish Empire, and of that of Gog and Magog (Russia, etc.) as the great northern confederacy takes place, that would introduce a very difficult element in the working out of prophecy. On the other hand if Gog and Magog (Russia, etc.) were marked by the Greek religion, and the revived Roman Empire by the Roman religion, there would be no restraint imposed by religion when the political uprising of these empires takes place. It seems as if the details and practices that Roman Catholicism stands for, as foretold in Revelation 17, and which have largely passed into history, identifies the prophecy concerning Thyatira as indicating the Western church, and not the Eastern. The Eastern church thrives among the Slav nations; the Western among the Latin races.

We believe then that Thyatira stands for Roman Catholicism with all its corruption and superstition, and persecuting zeal. To the overcomer in this church is given the promise of "the morning star" (Rev. 2: 28), a hope not given to the previous churches, consisting as they do of phase following phase, but showing that Thyatira is to go on till the coming of the Lord.

At this point we find a perfectly new development in church history. The testimony of Thyatira was so disgraceful, its superstition and evil practices so marked, that corporate testimony, that is the testimony of the **whole**, is brought to an end by the appearance of that phase of Church history indicated in the address to the church in Sardis, not to succeed Thyatira, but going on side by side with that church.

Doubtless this points to the wonderful Reformation when

a stand was made by the Spirit of God against grossly evil doctrines and equally evil practices. Failure came in quickly, for Sardis is said to have a name to live and yet be dead. Then there appears on the scene that which is represented by the church which is at Philadelphia, and lastly that which is represented by the church which is at Laodicea. The promise of the coming of the Lord is given to these last four churches, showing that they go on together till the coming of the Lord. It seems as if Philadelphia is more characterized by the recovery of many of God's dear people to a condition marked by cleaving to God's word and not denying His name, and for the patient waiting for the coming of our Lord, than by a defined ecclesiastical movement. Laodicea marks the greatest departure from the truth in the last times. Surely that is seen in Modernism denying every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, leaving only a hollow shell, an empty, nauseating profession to be utterly refused by our Lord, to be spued out of His mouth.

This brings us to the point we wish to make plain. Though **internal** factions were at work in the days of the Apostle Paul, there was no **open** division. To-day what do we see? Roman Catholicism, in this country a Reformed Church of England, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Quakers, so-called Plymouth Brethren, besides smaller sects without number, and crank religions of sorts.

A little over a century ago there was a very gracious work of God's Spirit, resulting in earnest Christians all over the world, seeking to gather to the Lord's name alone, eschewing party names and sectarian associations, and seeking to answer in simplicity to the teaching of Scripture. Alas, this beautiful testimony, amid the ruin of Christendom, has been blighted and spoiled by division after division occurring. The question arises with many, What shall we do? Where shall we go amid all this sad confusion? We answer, there are divine instructions left for us in the word of God.

It is very evident that the ministry of the Apostles, especially the peculiar ministry of the church committed to the Apostle Paul, was largely oral, as we have already

seen. It must have been so, for the great church epistles were not written till the very end of Paul's life, when a prisoner at Rome. It may have been that he wrote those valuable epistles when chained to a soldier in his own hired house (Acts 28: 30). This will bring into clear light why these epistles were written. Surely it was that all down the centuries saints of God might realize what was in the Divine mind about the church, its structure, its endowment, and the practice becoming those, who compose it. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy for this purpose. We read,

" These things have I written unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how to BEHAVE THYSELF in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

These epistles are surely for the instruction and help of the Lord's people till the end, forming their minds according to the divine pattern. But seeing the broken condition of the professing church and that corporate testimony has long since ceased, what directions do we get for these last days?

It is not a little remarkable that these great church epistles—Ephesians and Colossians—were followed in the course of a very few months by the Epistles of the Apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus. We remember these epistles were written to **individuals** for their help in the last days. We are certainly in the last days, as the state of everything around us testifies. Surely we are near the moment when we shall hear the summoning shout, and be caught up in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be with our Lord on high.

In drawing the attention of our readers to these epistles, we have then instructions given to each one of us as an individual. Here are the Divine instructions:

" The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use,

and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."  
(2 Tim. 2: 19—22.)

It is well to give careful heed to this charter for the last days. First it indicates to what a low level Christian profession had fallen, when we have to be thrown back, as it were, upon Divine omniscience for the knowledge of those, who are truly God's children. On our side we can only reckon that those, who depart from iniquity, are really the Lord's.

Further the professing church has grown so corrupt and has departed so gravely from the Divine plan, that there are found in it vessels to dishonour. These are of such a character that no Christian in loyalty to the Lord and His truth could walk with them. Many a saint remains in very doubtful associations, and listens to ministry that he knows is subversive of the truth of God, and yet remains in that association in the vain hope that his presence may help to stay the trend of that which is evil. The Divine injunctions in such a state of things are to be clear of it, so we find the apostolic instruction is that we should purge ourselves from these vessels to dishonour, so that we may be vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. This does not mean, as some have attempted to press, that we are in our minds and spirits to be free from evil teaching, and yet remain in fellowship with those, who propagate it. No juggling with facts, no attempts to square our consciences can make such a course right. No, the vessels unto dishonour are the men, who teach dishonourable doctrine, and we are to be separate from such, and seek to be vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. That is step number one.

Further we are told what is to be our aim, that is to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace. If we follow these four things we shall be rightly balanced in our thoughts. It is possible to be over-righteous and hard and unyielding. Here come in faith and love—**faith** connecting us with the spiritual world outside of time and sense, **love**, the expression of the Divine nature. Thus we arrive at peace, that great fruit of the Spirit.

Now we shall find others wrought upon by the Spirit of God in the same mind as ourselves. Calling upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart one is free happily to associate with such in godly Christian fellowship. "God setteth the solitary in families." (Psalm 68: 6.) "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18: 20.) Precious promise!

When in such a path and position one realizes how good it is to have God's original thought for His church, as told us in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, before our minds, showing us what is suitable to God, in the strangely altered days of to-day, as compared with the apostolic days, 2 Timothy 2: 19—22 is indeed a charter for the last days.

An illustration may help. In these days of high taxation it has fallen to the lot of a great many of the nobility, unable to keep up the home of their ancestors, to leave their noble mansions, and build themselves some modest house in which to live. Would it not have an influence on the minds of their children and grandchildren to be told of the glories of the past, to view with awe the imposing piles where their family had kept up state generation after generation, and give them a true desire to live with high ideas of right conduct in their altered circumstances? So it is very illuminating to study deeply the great church epistles, and other parts of God's word, to give, as it were, colour to our thoughts, and produce in us a deep desire to be treading the path that God would have us to tread to His glory. How blessed it is that we have the Lord's own company in all this.

## CHAPTER 22

### THE CHURCH IN THE MILLENNIUM

THE Book of Revelation, beginning at chapter 4, unfolds God's governmental dealings with this world prior to the setting up of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as the long-promised King of Israel, and entering upon His world-wide dominion as the Son of Man.

During that period the church will have been raptured to the Father's house at the Lord's second coming, and is seen, in the symbolic language of this book, as likened to four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment with crowns of gold upon their heads. At the close of this period of governmental judgments, spoken of as seals, trumpets and vials, the great battle of Armageddon will be fought, and at last our Lord will descend to take His rightful place in this world, and set up the true New World Order of righteousness, security, and peace.

The church will come with Him to share in His triumph and reign. In Revelation 21: 9 we get the introduction of the church in association with Christ during the millennium, the thousand years' reign of Christ. We read :

*" There came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."*

In response to this invitation the Apostle John in his vision is shown a great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. We may well ask the question, Why should the bride be seen as a city ? The answer is that the bride aspect of the church is not presented in Revelation 21: 9—27. The city aspect is here presented, the city being a symbolic way of showing that the church will be associated with our Lord in the administration of the millennial period. We associate the idea of administration with a city. We speak of the city council, the city hall, the city boundaries, etc.

That the city sets forth the church is clear, for we read that in the foundation of the city are inscribed the names

of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and we know that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. (Eph. 2: 20.)

The number twelve in Scripture is symbolic of administration. Twelve months in the year set forth God's administration in nature; twelve tribes of Israel, God's administration in connection with His earthly people; twelve apostles of the Lamb, His administration in connection with His church. In Revelation we have twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve apostles of the Lamb, twelve foundations of the city, its length and breadth and height measuring 12,000 furlongs each way. The size of the city is purely symbolic. Whoever heard of a city the shape of a cube, whose measurement covers 1,728,000 cubic miles. What may be the meaning of this huge measurement, unless it be to express in symbolism how vast is God's conception of the church, how complete is the triumph of Christ in that out of all the utter breakdown of the professing church in this world, there should spring from His hand a church, likened to a glorious city, in whose light all the nations of the world should walk.

The symbolism of Revelation 21 is magnificent to the last degree. We read that the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it.

“ No building made with hands,”

no intermediary as of old, no longer seeing through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13: 12), but the very presence of the Lord God and the Lamb constituting the glory of that city.

Again, the Lord God and the Lamb are the light of that city. No more “ philosophy and vain deceit,” no more “ science falsely so-called,” no more controversies as to the Person of Christ, but the full glory of Divine Persons illuminating that scene.

The glory of these Scriptures haunts one. They produce an impression very hard, nay impossible, to express. They give one the sense of what the Apostle Paul must have felt when he spoke of his being caught up to the third heaven, and hearing unspeakable words, not lawful for man to utter on earth.

The nations shall walk in the light of that city, but we

have to carefully note that the light is that of the Lord God and of the Lamb. The light of the city is **reflected** light. The city is just the medium through which it shines. What dignity and glory to be associated with our beloved Lord and Saviour in His reign upon the earth. The thousand years will roll by only to bring us to the end of time, and the church of God viewed as in eternity.

## CHAPTER 23

### THE CHURCH OF GOD AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

WE come now to the last aspect of the church as presented in Scripture. At the end of the thousand years reign of Christ will arise the last and most terrible of man's rebellions against God through the agency of Satan, let loose from the bottomless pit at the end of that period. We read,

“ And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”  
(Rev. 20: 7, 8.)

Jerusalem will sustain its last siege, fire will come down from God, the devil will be cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet will have found their portion, a great white throne will be set up, the earth and the heaven will flee away before the face of Him, who will sit on the throne, the wicked dead will stand before God, and the last great assize will take place. Those not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

Then there arises a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell, which will be characterized by the absence of all that makes this world sad. In the new creation scene there will be no more tears,

no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain. The former things shall have passed away and all things become new, never never to grow old.

In his vision, John sees the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down as a bride adorned for her husband. Will the reader note carefully the difference between Rev. 21: 9 and Rev. 21: 2?

Rev. 21: 9 presents the Lamb's wife as a **city**.

Rev. 21: 2 presents the city as a **bride**.

Rev. 21: 9 chronologically sets forth the introduction to the millennium.

Rev. 21: 2 sets forth chronologically the introduction to the eternal state, and more than 1,000 years lies between the millennium and the eternal state.

Rev. 21: 9, the scene is the first earth and the first heaven—the **old** creation, which will pass away.

Rev. 21: 2, the scene is the new earth and the new heaven—the **new** creation, which will never pass away.

So now we arrive at the last aspect of the church of God as the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife. It is touching that the church is presented as THE LAMB'S wife, as if to indicate at what price our Lord secured His bride, even by His sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary. We shall never forget this throughout eternity. No longer will it be the figure of the Head and the body, for under this figure the Head is in heaven, and the members on earth, No longer will there be the necessity for the gifts given by an ascended Lord in glory. There will be no necessity for evangelists, for there will be no unconverted to preach to there. There will be no need for teachers, for then all shall know as they are known, and knowledge shall pass away (1 Cor. 13: 8), in that all shall have full knowledge in heaven. What remains is a very rich and special presentation of the church of God as the object of the everlasting love of our blessed Lord, using the most intimate relationship in life, as illustration, that of husband and wife. (Eph. 5: 32.)

It is deeply interesting to connect this **last** aspect of the church of God with its **first** type, with which we began our meditations, when we saw that Adam and Eve were types of Christ and the Church. We then drew attention to "the

law of first mentions," indicating that which is fundamental and of prime importance. Eve was OF Adam. The church is OF Christ. We also drew attention to Isaac and Rebekah as typical of Christ and the church. Isaac walking in the fields at eventide, lifting up his eyes, and behold the camels were coming. Rebekah was about to be his. A moment of supreme joy to him surely.

May it not be true that our heavenly Bridegroom may be lifting up His eyes as the supreme moment comes for Him to shout the assembling shout that will bring His bride, spotless and pure, by His side? Can any finish be more glorious?—a finish that will never know an end, for the bride will never grow old, as earthly brides do. The bride will be the bride throughout the countless ages of eternity. What a triumph of Divine love! May the hour of His holy triumph and ours be very near.

“ Oh! wondrous call, that bringeth to Thy side,  
In unmarred beauty, Thy beloved Bride;  
To know Thy love—its wonders to explore,  
In rapture bow, and worship evermore.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come!”